

DECEMBER 1989

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The Atlantic

FICTION BY JOHN HERSEY / THE NEW RULES OF WORLD TRADE

CAN WE BE GOOD WITHOUT GOD?

*The political
meaning of
Christianity*

BY
GLENN TINDER



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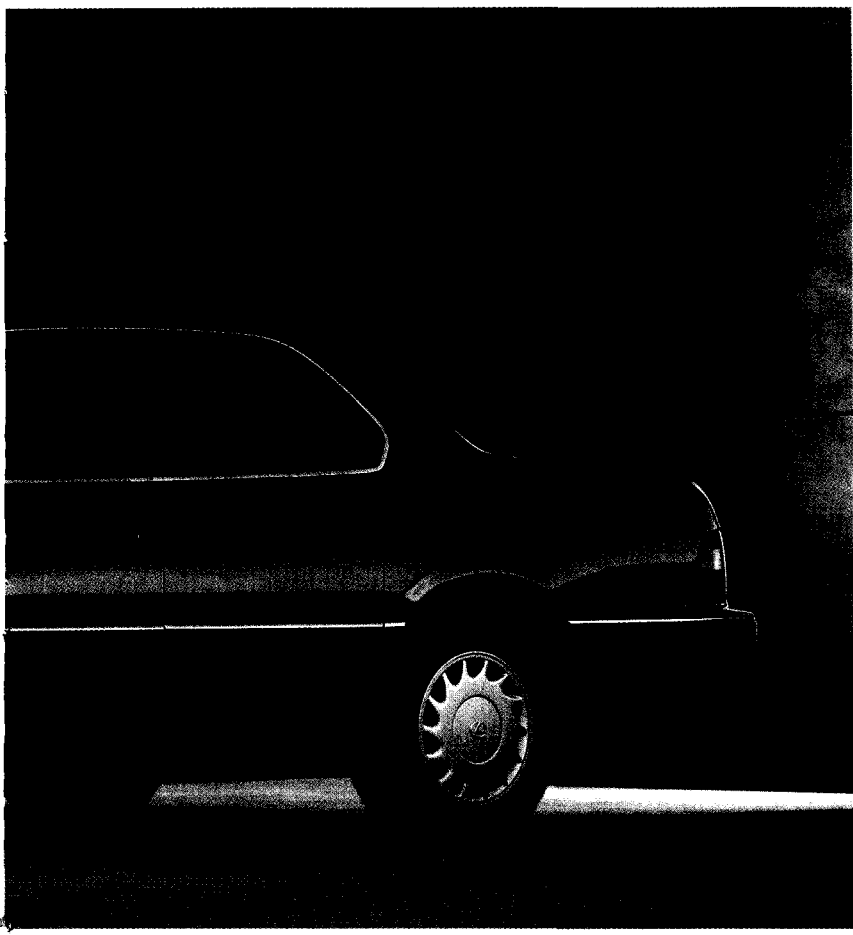
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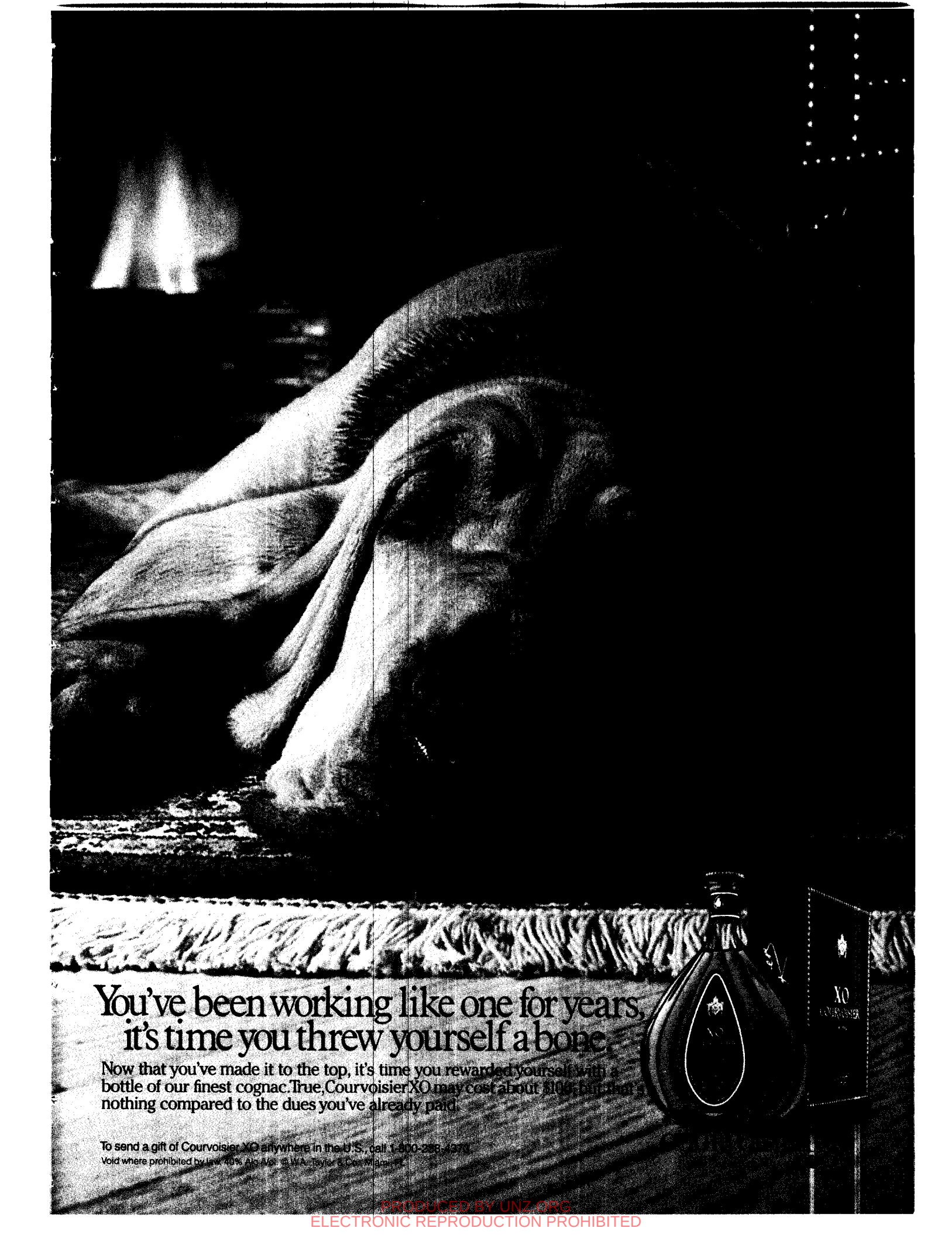
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*Braque in
Picasso's studio
in Paris, c.1911*



*Picasso wearing
Braque's uniform, c.1911*



THEY MADE AN ODD PAIR. THESE TWO
YOUNG ARTISTS. TOGETHER, THEY
CHANGED FOREVER THE WAY WE SEE.

EACH EVENING THEY WOULD MEET, the volatile Spaniard and the austere Parisian, to pour out ideas they would share with no one else. By day, the studios of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque exploded with images like none ever seen before: complex, fragmented, and disconcerting. *Cubism*, it was called. And it swept through 20th-century art like a fire.

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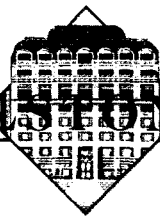
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THE ATLANTIC'S FICTION for December is the work of an old friend, John Hersey, who has published six stories in this magazine, along with the odd review and essay. Hersey's first *Atlantic* story, "The Death of Buchan Walsh," appeared in the April, 1946, issue, about two years after his brilliant book *A Bell for Adano* had solidified his steadily growing reputation as a reporter and a writer of fiction. More recently Hersey gave us "God's Typhoon" (January, 1988), a story based in part on his experiences as the child of Christian missionaries in mainland China.

At seventy-five, Hersey is among this magazine's older writers of fiction, though he is by no means an anomaly. Two years ago *The Atlantic* published a story called "Way to the Dump," by a "new" writer from Cape Cod named E. S. Goldman. The mysterious author proved to be E. Stanley Goldman, seventy-six, a retired advertising executive. Goldman's *Atlantic* story was included in the 1988 edition of *The Best American Short Stories*. Our recent contributors also include Ernst Havemann, seventy-one, a South African and a retired management consultant whose first published story,



Twelve thousand short stories are submitted each year

"Death of the Nation," appeared in this magazine in 1985.

Throughout its history *The Atlantic* has been a place not only for established writers but also for writers (of whatever age) whose work is not yet well known. Issues this year have, for example, included stories by Wayne Johnson ("Hippies, Indians, Buffalo," September), an alumnus of the University of Iowa's graduate writing program; Deborah Chanley Weiss ("Someplace Like New Jersey," August), a psychologist and social worker in Rochester, New York; and Mark Jacobs ("Stone Cowboy on the High Plains," June), an information officer who was until recently attached to the U.S. embassy in Bolivia. All three writers were appearing in a major national magazine for the first time. Earlier this year *The Atlantic* published a story by Amy Tan ("Two Kinds," February), whose first novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, was about to be published. The book was an immediate best seller. Julie Schumacher's story "The Private Life of Robert Schumann" (April), her first to appear in a major magazine, is one of two *Atlantic* stories that have been chosen for inclusion in the 1990 O. Henry Prize Stories. —THE EDITORS

CONTRIBUTORS

JAMES FALLOWS ("Getting Along With Japan") is *The Atlantic's* Washington editor. His latest book, *More Like Us: Making America Great Again*, was published last spring by Houghton Mifflin.

GLENN TINDER ("Can We Be Good Without God?") is a professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. He is the author of numerous books, including *Community: Reflections on a Tragic Ideal* (1980), and *Against Fate: An Essay on Personal Dignity* (1981). His essay in this issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* will appear in different form in *The Political Meaning of Christianity*, which will be published this month by Louisiana State University Press.

BRAD HOLLAND (cover artist) is an illustrator who lives and works in New York City. His drawings and paintings have been exhibited around the world, at sites including the Louvre and the Library of Congress. He is the recipient of gold medals from The Art Director's Club, the Society of Illustrators, and the Society of Publication Designers.

WILLIAM L. RATHJE ("Rubbish!") is an archaeologist and anthropologist, and the director of The Garbage Project, at the University of Arizona, in Tucson.

JONATHAN RAUCH ("The Future of Pennies") is a visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

WENDY LAW-YONE ("Burma: Life in the Hills") is a writer who lives in Washington, D.C. Law-Yone was born in Mandalay, Burma, the daughter of a prominent newspaper editor and publisher who was jailed after the Ne Win government came to power, in 1962. She made her way to the United States in 1967 after she herself spent time in jail.

LYNDA MORGENROTH ("Medicine: High-Risk Pain Pills") writes regularly for *The Boston Globe*.

ROLAND SODOWSKY ("The Origins of the Cowboy Boot") lives in Springfield, Missouri. Sodowsky's article in this issue will appear in a collection titled *Undue West: An Imaginative Social History of Cowboyism, Windmills, Rodeos, Brands, Pick-ups, Horse-trailing, and Much, Much More*, to be published next spring by the Corona Publishing Company.

HENRI COLE ("The Annulment") is a poet whose second collection, *The Zoo Wheel of Knowledge*, will be published this month.

JOHN HERSEY ("The Announcement") is a novelist and reporter who has taught for many years at Yale University. His books include *A Bell for Adano* (1944), which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, *Hiroshima* (1946), *The Wall* (1950), *A Single Pebble* (1956), *The War Lover* (1959), *Under the Eye of the Storm* (1967), *The Writer's Craft* (1974), and *The Call* (1987).

NEIL POSTMAN ("Learning by Story") is a professor of communications at New York University. His latest book, *Conscientious Objections*, was published last year.

LLOYD SCHWARTZ ("The Voices of Kurt Weill") is the classical-music critic for National Public Radio's *Fresh Air* and a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts in Boston.

The December Almanac was compiled with the assistance of Gail Cleere, of the U.S. Naval Observatory; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; and the Health Care Financing Administration.



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Editorial/Business Office
745 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116, (617) 536-9500
New York Advertising Office
599 Lexington Ave., N.Y., NY 10022, (212) 326-5350

Chicago
James Sheridan
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



NYC PUBLIC HOUSING

Bashing public housing has been standard practice in the media for several years, but I'm saddened to see *The Atlantic* joining the pack with Camilo José Vergara's article "Hell in a Very Tall Place" (September *Atlantic*).

The public-housing landscape he shows us is strangely incomplete. We see only the tall buildings, a few selected workers, spectral junkies, and the homeless. Vergara apparently chose *not* to speak with a single member of public housing's 250 active tenant organizations, or with a single one of the 15,000 active volunteers in 200 tenant patrols, or with a member of the Tenants Advisory Council, the umbrella organization representing the more than 500,000 tenants of public housing. He entered no community center, and spoke to not a single man or woman on the 2,000-member Housing Police Force.

Telescoping volumes of social history, he informs us that public-housing projects "have increasingly become permanent residences for the indigent." Actually, less than 30 percent of our tenants are on some form of welfare and another 30 percent are elderly. More than 40 percent are members of working families.

As for Vergara's verbal snapshots, there are no pumps, obsolete bronze or otherwise, embedded in pillars in the lobbies at the Langston Hughes Houses. The manager at the thirty-story Polo Grounds Towers says there is a problem with the homeless in one of the four buildings but no encampments of homeless people regularly sleeping on the roofs. Since the East River Houses were completed in 1941, we can hardly blame the architects for not designing the courtyard to prevent "escape." Vergara reports that only three percent of the projects he visited had tenant patrols. Of the projects he names, Jackson, Brownsville, Langston Hughes, Moore, Johnson, East

River, Marcus Garvey, Patterson, Abraham Lincoln, Bushwick, Marcy, Tilden, and Walt Whitman all report active tenant patrols.

Vergara portrays his always articulate street sources as being derisive about the "get tough" message of the Narcotics Task Force posters. We all have the right to be cynical about government efforts to combat narcotics, but many housing-authority employees have worked far beyond the call of duty to put together our anti-narcotics campaign. We started in 1986 and we have developed some effective measures. We are proud that our law department was the first to apply federal seizure and forfeiture statutes to recover apartments from drug dealers. We have stepped up eviction and police activity, including the deployment of specially trained anti-narcotics squads. We have developed promising job-training and education programs. The prevention and education campaigns, of which the posters are only a part, have been emulated nationwide. Give us credit for not being so fatuous as to think that posters will frighten drug criminals. They were intended to reassure tenants that someone is on their side, and they have been received largely in that spirit. We have worked tirelessly through our network of tenant patrols and tenant organizations to spread the anti-drug message. That we are succeeding to a degree is borne out by cooperation from both tenants and staff, who daily report suspected drug locations.

No one is more aware of our shortcomings than we are. But we work within the severe budget constraints imposed by Washington. We have not abandoned our 318 developments and their 500,000 people to the drug dealers. There are no vacancies in New York City's public housing, and there is a long waiting list of applicants.

EMANUEL P. POPOLIZIO
Chairman
New York City Housing Authority
New York, N.Y.



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Camilo José Vergara replies:

Emanuel P. Popolizio's characterization of my article as public-housing bashing is unjust. I made plain that my subject was the roughly 90,000 dwellings in NYCHA complexes that are in ghetto areas, and that I consider public housing a precious resource. His statistics about the system as a whole are beside the point, because projects in poor communities have a significantly smaller proportion of working families than other public housing and nearly 20 percent more welfare recipients. More important, as indigent families replace working families, the projects are becoming concentrations of single mothers and children in environments of heavy drug use, cut off from the rest of the city.

To NYCHA's credit, its complexes are still in good physical condition. But after a lag of two decades behind the rest of the nation, today NYCHA has scores of projects that are as violent and full of despair as the worst of those in Chicago and Newark; in these respects, Unity Plaza, Cypress Hills, Prospect Plaza, Marcus Garvey, Samuel J. Tilden, and Langston Hughes, in Brooklyn; Jefferson and Martin Luther King, in Manhattan; and Morrisania Air Rights, Dr. Betances III (the rehab part of Mill Brook Houses), part of University Avenue Rehabilitation, and the Butler Houses, in the South Bronx—all of which I visited—are examples of the worst in public housing in the nation, and many other projects are becoming part of the trend.

For half a year I was immersed in the life of NYCHA projects. I asked questions of more than a hundred employees—mostly maintenance men, to be sure, but also about thirty superintendents, managers, assistant managers, and tenants. I observed them in hundreds of spontaneous interactions and listened to their explanations as problems were brought up. They overwhelmingly stated that they were embattled, strained, forgotten, getting demoralized, and losing the struggle to make their complexes livable. To these people, the fact that other NYCHA housing is faring far better is irrelevant.

Among the errors for which Mr. Popolizio blames me, one is about homeless people sleeping on the roofs of the Polo Grounds Towers, in Harlem. I found the report that people slept

there so extraordinary that I visited the complex twice.

The phrase that I quoted, "designed for escape," was to call attention to physical factors that now make NYCHA complexes very difficult to defend; I was hardly blaming the architects responsible for interior courtyards. As for the hole I saw in a pillar of the lobby of the Langston Hughes Houses, my guide told me that a bronze pump had been stolen from it.

Mr. Popolizio faults me for not having spoken to members of the NYCHA police, but they were not much in evidence during my visits. I spoke to one officer at the Jackson Houses, in the Bronx, and I saw how surprised a maintenance man was at the sight of a police officer patrolling a roof of the UPACA Houses, in Manhattan. "He must be new," he said, and added, "he will soon learn; they never come into the buildings unless you call them." After these two experiences I never saw any other NYCHA policemen in or near the buildings.

As for tenant patrols, I met only a dozen members in all; they were manning four buildings out of the 140 that I visited. I spoke to these people for hours and photographed them at their posts with their badges and their telephones. They were proud, elderly women and men, several with visible handicaps, sitting for long hours in dark hallways trying to stop aggressive teenagers from entering their buildings. Perhaps if I had visited the projects at night, I would have seen more tenant patrols in operation.

After completing "Hell in a Very Tall Place" I visited the Alfred E. Smith Houses, in Manhattan, next to Chinatown—a healthy complex whose problems were trivial in comparison with those of the projects I had visited earlier. In the parking lot of this complex NYCHA executives freely leave their cars and walk a few blocks to headquarters. When I discussed problems with a housing-authority employee there, no killings were mentioned. And no signs of a large-scale drug infestation were visible. Only demanding tenants constantly calling to make small complaints were seen as a problem. At the Smith Houses it is like the good old days. Thus it is not surprising that this is one of the complexes where visitors are brought to see what public housing in New York City is like.

Meanwhile, according to a worker at the Cypress Hills Houses, in mid-September, after this article appeared, the housing authority posted a letter by the time clock warning employees not to "talk to anybody." Below the letter an anonymous employee wrote, "Why? You don't want anybody telling the truth?"

VERMONT BITES BACK

Having lived in a small town that "depends crucially on tourists," I will preface my objection to Jack Beatty's article ("Brigadoon, U.S.A." September *Atlantic*) by saying diplomatically, as most locals learn to do about tourists, that I am not judging the man himself. Beatty is, probably, a kind husband, an active citizen, a donor to deserving charities, a good neighbor, and so forth. Even so, I wish to express my astonishment at the patronizing tone of his travel piece about Grafton, Vermont.

Beatty applauds the fact that "life goes on" among the expensive antiques and beautiful maple trees, yet cites as proof only a dog barking and an old man napping in a rocking chair. The one true sign of life, "the occasional tradesman's house with its rustic sign (NOJOB TO BIG OR SMALL)" (those charming misspellings), is noted in passing, despite the fact that it indicates an economic desperation at sad odds with Beatty's focus on generous chutney spreads and superior pheasant for dinner.

I do understand the difference between a travel article and a discourse on the social injustices of the world. Beatty's goal may have been only to share information with upper-class urban refugees looking for inns and restaurants in the country run by other upper-class urban refugees (now retired) of "rare good taste." But he sets himself up for a fall when he wonders, with the reader, what the locals were thinking of him as he strolled past their doors. I can answer his question. We were wondering how some people manage to have enough money to spend \$300 a night on a room at the local inn because "the food alone was worth it." We were wondering whether we had enough wood (our only source of heat) to get through the winter. We were wondering whether to hang a



sign, NO JOB TOO BIG OR SMALL, to help make ends meet.

JULIE LARIOS
Seattle, Wash.

For the record, the Saab is not the official Vermont car, although it may be the official car of the \$100,000-plus group that has moved here trying to find the good life.

Articles like Beatty's would be harmless enough except that they are often followed by people who pay too much for land and push prices beyond what the locals can pay.

When I was younger, hippies came here looking for the perfect commune. Now the Brie set looks for the perfect old farmhouse. Vermont wasn't fantasy land in 1969, and it isn't now.

PETER COBB
Barre, Vt.

We Vermonters certainly are pleased that articulate damn fools like Jack Beatty find our state's charms irresistible. After all, catering to such folks is, as he points out, crucial to our economy.

Nonetheless, it is annoying to have such visitors carrying hopelessly ill-informed caricatures, formed from the soft seat of a bicycle during a brief weekend ramble around one small corner of the state, back to *The Atlantic* for national dissemination. I have in mind particularly "the social museum that is rural Vermont" that Beatty so facetiously discerned in an aging farmhouse beside the road near Grafton.

Had Beatty looked upon an antique Vermont farmhouse and spoken of the "architectural museum" or the "visual museum" that is rural Vermont, one would not mind. But "social museum" implies something not just about the scene but about the people who inhabit it as well; it implies a backwardness or primitiveness in their life-style that simply doesn't exist. Vermonters, rural and urban, live lives as thoroughly contemporary as other Americans, are as thoroughly steeped in American popular culture as folks elsewhere, and are caught up—sometimes to our chagrin—in the same complex social forces that buffet the rest of the nation. Alas, the "ambient balm" experienced

by visitors in places like Grafton is deceptive.

GARY P. FOURNIER
Lunenburg, Vt.

Jack Beatty's travel writing is tops, and Grafton, Vermont, must be a delightful place. But I think perhaps some readers, especially the urbane, may be unnecessarily concerned about the wildlife in the area as a result of Beatty's comments on coyotes and bears.

Coyotes present no more danger to human beings than do falling stars. And eastern black bears are rather timid, virtually 100 percent herbivorous, and present no more threat to humans than do raccoons.

JOHN BURTON BUTE
Seabrook, Texas

Jack Beatty replies:

Your travel writer is a kind of sherpa for the leisure classes. He explores places that those with more money and time than he has might like to visit. And, as Julie Larios acknowledges, a travel article is not a disquisition on in-

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equality. Readers of such articles want a truthful account of the sensation of pleasure, and that is what I tried to give them.

I appeal to disinterested readers: if Vermont were a car, wouldn't it be a Saab? Elegant yet practical, speedy but safe, serviceable in all weathers, the Saab is sprung from the Swedish version of Yankee ingenuity. So you see, Parson Cobb, I was making a little joke. Also, I was reporting what I saw: Saabs to the left of me, Volvos to the right, beauty all around—such is the Vermont I saw. “Social museum?” I quoted the phrase from William Allen White's biography of Calvin Coolidge. Mr. Fournier's beef is with him. I stand behind the phrase, though. With Thomas Jefferson, I think that country people and country states preserve virtues rapidly disappearing from megalopolises. I believe I can prove that contention by comparing the number of crimes committed against persons and property in Vermont with those committed in a city that has only slightly more people in it than the whole of Vermont, Boston. I'm comparing apples and oranges, Mr. Fournier will no doubt say. But that is just the point. The country is not only different from the city—it's better, in respect to that salient measure of social virtue, crime. Class dismissed.

PASSING OF THISTLE

If the poetry editor finds it possible to excavate himself from the avalanche of letters in the same key as this one, I hope he will accept my admiration and thanks for “The Passing of Thistle” (September *Atlantic*). I generally like Peter Davison's poetry anyway, but Tyke's bout of convulsions late this past May all too plainly forecast what the kind doctors at Angell Memorial would have to do. The tumor was inoperable; the only question was whether we wished to prolong her life into its twelfth year by drugging her into a stupor each day, but still subjecting her to further seizures. We made the mature, responsible decision, and then we all wept like children for about three mourning days.

So now the squirrels, none of which she ever caught—though, undiscouraged, she harried them indefatigably—feast insolently without let or

hindrance on the nuts and berries in our yard, chattering and giggling like the prematurely promiscuous sophomore girls I was never able to identify in time, and the quail may boldly bathe in the blasted swimming pool without a moment's thought for that annoying golden retriever that used to evict them, furiously—and never caught any of them, either.

The rest of the family lobbies for another dog, but I am adamant. Tyke was my eleventh, and I am not as resilient as I used to be. Davison caught it all perfectly.

GEORGE V. HIGGINS
Milton, Mass.

Reading “The Passing of Thistle” brought tears to my eyes as I thought about my springer spaniel Molly, whom I put to sleep a month ago. She was sixteen and then some when her time came. I buried her in the shade of a large cottonwood tree, and while I was standing over her grave, a majestic swallowtail butterfly flew up, almost touching me, and landed on the grave. For a dozen years we hunted and walked in the woods together, sharing a happiness that comes only with trust and devotion. She had great pride and dignity, and I will miss her.

DON REICH
Cardiff by the Sea, Calif.

Anyone who has ever been owned by a dog knows Thistle.

Thank you to Peter Davison for expressing so well our memory and sense of loss.

EUNICE GRAHAM
Takoma Park, Md.

I read Peter Davison's poem “The Passing of Thistle” with great emotion, as I recently watched the passing of my seventeen-year-old cocker spaniel, Brandy. Brandy, like Thistle, had a slow decline through blindness, deafness, and incontinence, negotiating our house with his nose for both touch and smell, guided when he went astray by gentle hands to set him straight. We spent his last days together, and he left very gently as I and a kindly vet saw him through to the end. As the vet said when it was over, the trouble with dogs is that we outlive them.

KATHLEEN McDONALD
Hillsborough, N.C.

SHIMMY

In your September issue you permitted Harvey Oxenhorn (“Newfoundland: Tuning the Rig”) to write of “Shimmying down the main shed's outer wall.” Please, gentlemen: “shimmy” is a dance made popular by Gilda Gray in the early days of jazz. (It is also mentioned in the title of the old song “I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate.”) Oxenhorn did not “shimmy” down the wall; he “shinnied” down, probably by using his arms and legs in close contact with the wall's surface. Anyone who has shinnied up or down a tree, pole, or rain-spout will know exactly what I mean.

ALLEN D. HOWLAND
Greenville, S.C.

Mr. Howland is correct; the error, not Mr. Oxenhorn's, occurred during editing. Readers of the humor piece by Roy Blount, Jr., in last month's *Atlantic* will recall his eloquent thoughts on the subject: “When you talk shimmy, strictly speaking, you're talking one of two things: the front end of a motor vehicle or the hips and shoulders of her sister Kate.”

—THE EDITORS

WORD HISTORIES

To (Los Angeles) teenagers, *buff* (Word Histories, September *Atlantic*) is an adjective describing a well-built man, as in “your guy's way *buff*.”

ANNA SCOTT
Los Angeles, Calif.

In your July issue Craig Carver (Word Histories) surmises that “Will it play in Peoria?” means that a success in that city will be a success elsewhere. I believe the early sense of this phrase was different. A play might succeed in New York, where audiences were presumed (by New Yorkers) to be more sophisticated, broad-minded, and intelligent than those in Peoria. If it would not play in Peoria, no matter how brilliant the play was, there was no use taking it on the road.

President Bush's problem is that he must take his show on the road, not only to places like Peoria and Lubbock but to Paris and Lusaka, Poland and Latin America. Not having visited either Peoria or Lubbock, I suggest with



some hesitation that they do not give him much to go on in exercising his worldwide judgment.

In any event, what Mr. Bush needs is not a bellwether but a touchstone.

JOHN KENDRICK
Vancouver, B.C.

IQ AND BIRTH RATES

Richard Herrnstein ("IQ and Falling Birth Rates," May *Atlantic*) raises the specter of a declining national intelligence level associated with a supposed negative correlation between fertility and parental IQ. He also suggests that economic calamity may ensue from this alleged dysgenic trend. Herrnstein's fanciful anxieties recall similar alarms expressed earlier in the century: for example, by the psychologist Raymond Cattell, in *The Fight for Our National Intelligence* (1937). The fears Herrnstein expresses are no more likely to prove warranted than those of earlier generations of Cassandras.

First of all, demographers and psychologists are by no means in agreement that higher-IQ parents are more likely to have small families than are lower-IQ parents. The literature is replete with positive and nil, as well as negative, correlations between parental IQ and fertility. Data showing the purported negative relationship, including the data used by Daniel Vining upon which Herrnstein relies, often derive from samples of women whose childbearing is not yet completed. Because higher-IQ women tend to complete their childbearing later, such data exaggerate by as much as half the rela-

tionship between fertility and IQ. Moreover, the notion, advanced by Vining and repeated by Herrnstein, that only during the Baby Boom was the tendency of higher-IQ parents to have fewer children reversed is contradicted by Vining's own publications that report evidence of a *positive* correlation between fertility and parental IQ for parents giving birth from the mid-1920s through the mid-1970s.

Second, as Herrnstein himself notes, even if the purported relationship between IQ and fertility held,

tal IQ and number of children produced is only on the order of 0.05 to 0.10, and is of uncertain sign. Clearly, falling birth rates may be supposed to have more than countered whatever dysgenic trends are otherwise present because of differential fertility.

Finally, Herrnstein argues, on the basis of high-validity coefficients relating intelligence-test scores to job performance, that our national economic efficiency "depends on still intractable individual characteristics," and that dysgenic trends threaten to "swamp

the effects of anything else we might do about our economic standing in the world." Without gainsaying that people who score higher on cognitive tests may well perform better on the job, I find Herrnstein's hyperbolic conclusions by no means warranted. Changes in productivity are overwhelmingly determined by factors unrelated to changes in the IQ level of the work force. Elsewhere (*Contemporary Education Review*, Spring, 1984), in part utilizing the same results of John Hunter and Frank Schmidt on which Herrnstein relies, I have calculated

that the maximum decrement in American productivity attributable to test-score declines from 1967 to 1980 is nine tenths of one percent, and may be as low as two tenths of one percent. From 1973 to 1976 alone, productivity in the United States fell by three percent. The maximum amount of this decline attributable to the lower test scores of new entrants into the work force is two tenths of one percent, or seven percent of the entire decline. So, while we may be able to raise productivity somewhat by enhancing the



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dysgenic trends would ensue only in the absence of countervailing forces. Herrnstein fails to realize that falling birth rates are themselves such a countervailing force. Family size is itself an important causal influence on children's IQs. Quite apart from the IQ levels of the parents, children growing up in small families are more likely to have higher IQs than children growing up in large families. While the correlation between family size and children's intelligence-test scores is on the order of -0.3, the correlation between paren-



intellectual skills of the work force, it is pie in the sky to think that that will advance us very far in the economic competition in which we are engaged.

MICHAEL R. OLNECK
Madison, Wis.

R. J. Herrnstein replies:

Michael Olneck suggests here, as he has elsewhere, that nothing in the reproductive patterns of contemporary America threatens our economic productivity. In writing my article I tried to give his arguments due weight, but in my judgment the evidence supports less optimistic conclusions.

My article discussed the negative correlation between fertility and intelligence, which must reduce the population's average intelligence over generations, barring some countervailing influence. The larger the correlation, the more rapidly the average declines. Olneck seems to accept the logic of my argument, but, for various reasons, he thinks my concerns are unfounded.

He evidently disputes the evidence for a negative correlation, but the case is far stronger than his letter suggests. This is no place to rehash the data, but I can summarize the main conclusions of a recent survey, one that takes Olneck's views explicitly into account. In their survey (published in 1988 in the technical journal *Social Biology*) Robert Retherford, of the Population Institute, in Honolulu, and William Sewell, Olneck's colleague at the University of Wisconsin, conclude, "Differential fertility by IQ in the United States appears to have been negative in this century." They confirm that even though the correlation seemed to be nil or positive during the Baby Boom, it has become negative again in recent generations.

Retherford and Seward also point out that people with lower IQs not only have more children but have them younger. This correlation between age and reproduction exacerbates the negative correlation between fertility and IQ. The low-IQ end of the population is growing faster than the high-IQ end both because it is more fertile and because its generation length is shorter. It would be hard to come up with precise estimates of the long-term impact on the average intelligence of our population, but given the data as a whole, I consider Olneck's optimistic reassurances unconvincing and unconstructive.

Retherford and Sewell also show that the negative correlation between IQ and fertility is much stronger for women than for men, substantiating my argument that it is mainly something about recent redefinitions of female roles that is at present creating the fertility differential in IQ.

Olneck says that shrinking family size alone will reverse the downward pressures of differential fertility on intelligence. There may be some small effect of this sort, but it is limited, providing a one-shot benefit commensurate with the drop in average family size, whereas the effects of differential fertility cumulate indefinitely, as long as fertility is differential.

Finally, Olneck's estimates of the correlation between IQ and worker productivity are much smaller than the ones cited in my article. All these estimates, as my article said, are soft, involving as they do many statistical assumptions to fill voids in hard data. I consider Olneck's estimates unrealistically low, but my reasons are not easily expressed nontechnically. It may help, however, to recall that all current estimates say that earning power is these days more dependent on the difference between a high school and a college education than it has ever been before. All the commentators in the popular media that I have read or heard assume that this shows the increasing economic importance of education. Education is, to be sure, relevant, but there are strong scientific reasons for an alternative interpretation. Since educational attainment in the United States is highly correlated with IQ, the rising economic productivity of the more educated may be yet another reflection of an increasingly powerful association between worker productivity and intelligence as measured by objective tests.

THE HART OF IT

Surely it was Stephen Crane, and not Hart Crane, who was part of the "Ring of Conspirators" in Miranda Seymour's book, capsuled in Brief Reviews in your July issue. A *lapsus calami*? No doubt. But if Homer can nod, so can your extremely competent reviewer, Phoebe-Lou Adams.

TALIAFERRO BOATWRIGHT
Stonington, Conn.

Phoebe-Lou Adams replies:

Of course it was Stephen, not Hart, or even Ichabod, Crane who was associated with Henry James. The typing hand is sometimes quicker than the proofreading eye.

ADVICE & CONSENT

Cullen Murphy's concern for our Cera's lamentable lack of tantalizing mysteries being left for future ages is well taken ("The Tithe," September *Atlantic*). I think, however, that my friend the history professor A. Daniel Frankforter has the answer. Once every decade, he says, we should bury a shopping mall. Doing so would be relatively cheap (tax write-off for the owners), and it would most certainly present to those who follow us ages hence an accurate picture of our lives (it's all plastic anyway, and will be perfectly preserved in even the most humid climates).

I cannot agree, however, with Murphy's assessment that we have nothing to lose: we have that little shred of pride in our age and that little bit of dignity that we harbor in our most inner selves.

CHESTER L. WOLFORD
Erie, Pa.

It's really great to be living in that red section on Michael J. Weiss's map in "Bookworms Versus Couch Potatoes" (At Last Count, October *Atlantic*), but he is comparing book-buying with television-watching. Wouldn't it be more germane if he compared book-reading with television-watching? He might get the same sort of results, of course, as I, for one, buy more than twenty books a year and also check out books from the library.

MARY E. RINARD
Boise, Idaho

EDITOR'S NOTE

In the October *Atlantic* the name of Randy Cohen's new book was incorrectly given. It is *Diary of a Flying Man*.

A special selection of letters written in response to Thomas J. Moore's article "The Cholesterol Myth" (September issue) will appear in the January *Atlantic*.

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THE DECEMBER ALMANAC

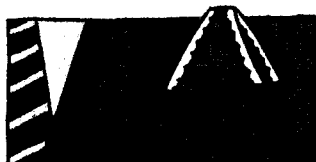


DEMOGRAPHICS

The volume of retail goods lost to "shrinkage"—that is to say, shoplifting—in December will be double that in an average month. Some 15 percent of all losses from shoplifting occur between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Almost half of such losses result from thefts not by shoppers but by employees. To combat employee theft the Chicago department store Marshall Field's provides a reward of \$500 to workers who provide store executives with information about dishonest co-workers. Marshall Field's paid out \$133,000 in rewards to employees in 1988. Retailers have experimented with a variety of high-tech means to deter shoplifting by customers, but the most effective deterrent is least common: diligent, helpful sales personnel. According to a spokesman for the Illinois Retail Merchants Association, "Nothing beats shoplifting like customer service. The dishonest customer is looking for lack of attention."

EXPIRING PATENT

No. 3,704,470. Conversation piece. "A novelty device which simulates a pair of panties is designed to fit invertedly in the breast pocket so as to simulate a handkerchief. The bottoms of the leg portions are bordered preferably in lace [and are] slightly separated to simulate two panel portions of a hanky. The item is used for its amusing shock value when it is removed from the pocket. . . ."



HEALTH & SAFETY

December 20, the Health Care Financing Administration will release its third annual report on hospital mortality rates for Medicare patients; the report is intended as a guide for health-care providers and consumers. Last year's report revealed that 188 of the 6,000 hospitals surveyed had higher death rates (defined as the proportion of patients who died within 30 days of admission) than would have been predicted on the basis of a complex formula developed by the HCFA. Of these 188 hospitals, 75 appeared on the list for the second year in a row, making them targets of an inspection by state regulatory agencies for the HCFA. Associations of physicians and hospitals have criticized the HCFA reports as blunt instruments, noting that mortality rates reflect many factors besides the quality of hospital care.



THE SKIES

December 12, Full Moon, also known this month as the Long Night Moon. 13, Geminid meteor showers, which are possibly the remnants of an extinct comet whose core is now the asteroid 3200 Phaethon, peak tonight. 21, Winter Solstice; winter begins. The seven days before and after the solstice were known in ancient times as the Halcyon Days, when a fabled bird, the halcyon, was believed to bring an unwonted calm to the winds and the waves. 27, New Moon. 31, at 6:59:60 Eastern Standard Time a "leap second" will be added to the world's official clocks. Leap seconds are added periodically because Earth's rotation is slowing, and as a result astronomical time and atomic time fall out of synchrony.



ARTS & LETTERS

December 10, the 89th presentation of the Nobel Prize awards. 15, a re-creation of the premiere, 50 years ago today, of *Gone With the Wind* to take place in Atlanta, with a parade and a Scarlett and Rhett look-alike contest among the related events. Had the original names in Margaret Mitchell's manuscript been retained, the opening sequence of *Gone With the Wind* would have shown Pansy O'Hara running across the broad lawn of Fontenoy Hall.

GOVERNMENT

Two safety regulations for motor vehicles go into effect this month. December 11, as of this day the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration requires most new-model cars to have lap-and-shoulder safety belts for back-seat passengers. Manufacturers of convertibles, vans, and small trucks, however, don't yet have to comply. 31, all-terrain vehicles, or ATVs, manufactured after today must conform to a set of standards agreed upon by the major ATV manufacturers and the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Since 1985 ATV-related fatalities have averaged 300 a year; in 1988 all-terrain vehicles were responsible for 62,000 visits to the emergency room. The new standards cover everything from speed to brakes to stability, and they require that ATVs carry labels warning against various hazards, including the carrying of passengers.



Q & A

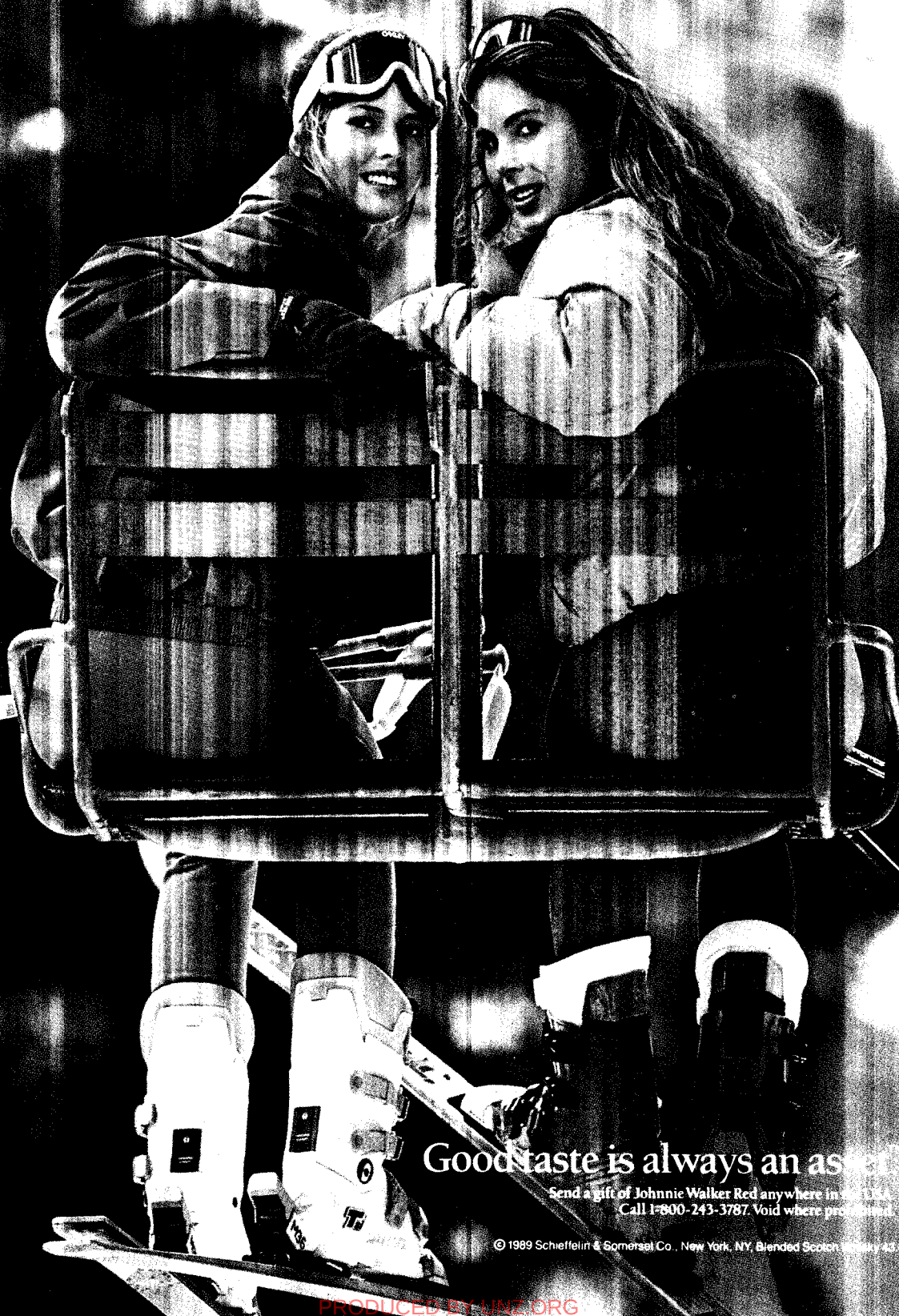
Will a candle burn in a spaceship?
It will, but maybe not for long. NASA scientists speculate that in the absence of gravity, a candle's flame and combustion gases will form a sphere, rather than the familiar teardrop, and that the flame may provide less heat to the candle wax. If insufficient oxygen diffuses through the bubble of gases to the flame, or if the flame doesn't vaporize the wax fast enough, the flame will go out altogether. It seems, then, that future space travel is not likely to feature lingering candlelit dinners: there just isn't the right atmosphere.



100 YEARS AGO

Albert G. Browne, writing in the December, 1889, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "In spite of present discords, time already has contradicted Bolivar's despairing declaration to Flores sixty years ago that 'America for us' (that is, the people of Spanish descent) 'is ungovernable.' The number of her statesmen who see that the salvation depends upon inoculating Latin traditions and habits with Saxon principles of truth and liberty and law is multiplying. Already in her temperate zone two countries have proved themselves capable of orderly administration without foreign help—the Argentine Republic and Chile. . . . The eastern slopes of the Andes and upper waters of the vast rivers which pour into the South Atlantic. . . are destined to be the home of a civilization achieved by the Latin race perhaps excelling ours. There is no region of the earth which a mortal eye permitted to anticipate a century, and behold now in a vision as it will be then, can better wish to view."

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REPORTS & COMMENT

NOTES

The Future of Pennies

An exchange

Let's Ban Them

BY MY CALCULATION, the penny became what is known in scientific circles as not worth the trouble on March 3, 1984, give or take three or four years. That was when the odds of my bending over to pick up a penny became less than fifty-fifty. As near as I can tell, the only reason to pick up a one-cent piece, as the penny is known in the numismatic business (Britain has a penny, the professionals will tell you; the United States has a one-cent piece), is to avoid getting stuck with four of them on the next trip to the drugstore. The penny's uselessness is testified to by millions of little bowls sitting next to millions of cash registers, underneath the folk-poetic inscription "Need a penny? / Take a penny / Have a penny? / Leave a penny."

This is doggerel we could do without. It is what is known in literary circles as not worth the trouble. I suspect that many Americans feel the way that I do about this. In fact, I know they do. Last year *USA Today* conducted a survey in which 37 percent of 13,311 people said they favored dumping the penny, and the other 63 percent could hardly have been serious.

Americans who are fed up with pennies—which are not even really made of copper anymore, because they

wouldn't be worth it—have on their side a political movement that is surging through an office on the third floor of a building in downtown Washington, D.C. James C. Benfield, who occupies this office, is leading a lobbying campaign to abolish the penny.

"Like a lot of people, I dislike pennies, a lot, as a nuisance," Benfield told me when I went to see him at the lobbying firm of Bracy Williams & Company. "And I started poking around on this thing and said, Let's form a coalition to do this." That was in 1986. Today Benfield is the founder, executive director, and only paid employee of the Coin Coalition. Its agen-

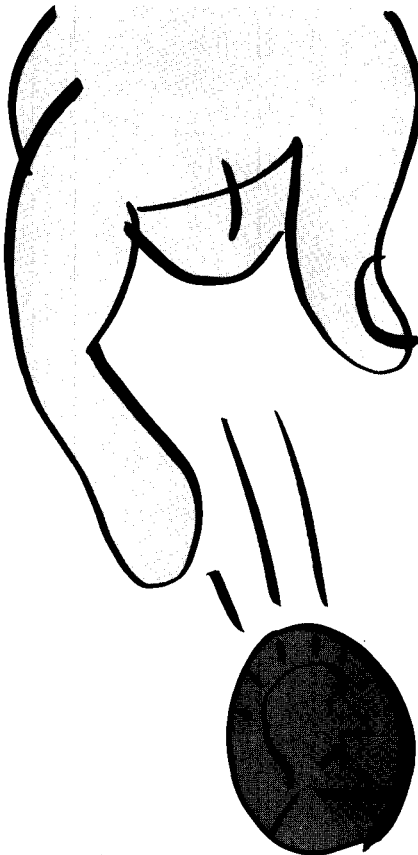
da is twofold: first, and principally, to replace the dollar bill with a dollar coin, which lasts many times longer and so is much cheaper to keep in circulation; and second, to abolish the penny, whose disappearance would help make room in your pocket for the dollar coin.

"Not only do I hate pennies," Benfield said, "but I saw that I was in a position to do something about it. I'm lucky. I'm real lucky. I have the luxury of living in Washington, D.C., where the decisions are made. And I do know enough about the legislative process to know how to put together a movement. And if you do that, you can make something happen."

Nowadays the Coin Coalition boasts support from the public-transit people, the vending-machine people, the American Council of the Blind, and many others, most of whom are in it mainly for the dollar coin. But not all. The convenience-store people, who ought to know, figure that an average of two to three seconds per transaction would be saved if the penny disappeared. "The cost of handling pennies," writes Teri Richman, of the National Association of Convenience Stores, "exceeds their value in commercial transactions."

Just for a little perspective, if the 1936 song "Pennies From Heaven" came out today, it would have to be "Dimes From Heaven" to mean the same thing. Dimes from heaven might be worth the trouble. As recently as the early 1950s a penny was equivalent to today's nickel. "We're dealing with a one-cent piece that has literally outlived its commercial usefulness," says Representative James A. Hayes, an anti-penny Democrat from Louisiana.

For a little more perspective, consider that last year the U.S. Mint made





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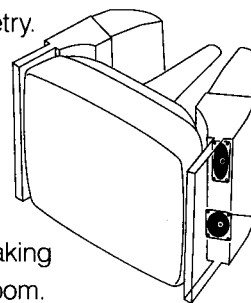
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No, Let's Keep Them

11,346,550,443 pennies, not counting proof sets. Of each year's shiny new crop, something like half will have disappeared from circulation within a year. Some of them are hoarded, stock-piled, and collected. A lot of them—let's not kid ourselves—wind up in the netherworld where paper clips and hairpins and rubber bands go. That seems rather a waste, especially since the mint says that it costs about six tenths of a cent to make a penny—which, by the way, is 97.5 percent zinc, with a copper coating.

The answer is abolition. We can round cash-register totals—after sales taxes—up or down to the nearest nickel. If your grocery bill is \$17.62, you'll pay \$17.60. If \$17.63, you'll pay \$17.65. In the long run you will come out even, and so will the grocer. Your old pennies will still be legal tender; you'll just have to spend them five at a time—except when you write a check or charge something (in non-coin transactions, single-cent denominations would still be okay).

I have been experimenting with this scheme, and it seems to work. Sometimes I buy something and let the register clerk keep the pennies. Sometimes I buy something and the clerk doesn't insist that I tender the odd penny or two. No big deal.

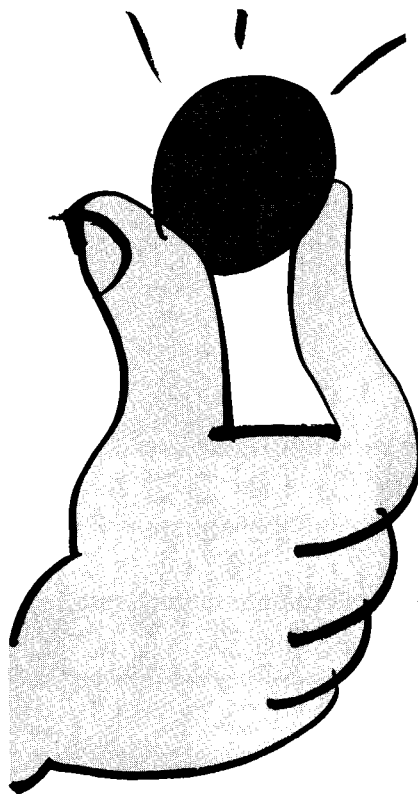
Representative Hayes supports getting rid of pennies and going to rounding. Of a similar mind is Representative Jim Kolbe, of Arizona, a state where the copper industry is so big that the Arizona state flag has a copper-colored star in the middle. He is pushing a bill, with backing and advice from the Coin Coalition, alias Jim Benfield, to switch to a dollar coin—which he expects would be made mostly of copper. But he has tacked on a provision calling for a study of getting rid of the penny, and basically he is an anti-penny Republican. "We're a country that's very loath to change our currency, probably uniquely so," he says. "But there's nothing you can purchase with a penny anymore, or with two or three cents. I just think it's time to consider making a change in the currency. It's a staggering cost to business of handling these pennies. It would save an enormous amount of time and energy."

Kolbe and Hayes and Benfield—call them the National Front for the Liberation of Pockets, and wish them well.

—Jonathan Rauch

THE PROPOSAL THAT the United States get rid of pennies is, like many proposals that smack of cool-headed, cold-blooded pragmatism, one that should be implemented on another planet. It is the kind of apparently sensible yet hugely disruptive reform that a wise society will treat with the same disdain that America has already shown for the metric system and phonetic spelling.

Should we stop making cents? The penny we now have was issued in 1909 to celebrate the centennial of our sixteenth President's birth, and its name and ancestry go back to the eighth century. From the start the penny's biggest foe has been inflation, which has for centuries threatened to render the coin valueless. And yet monarchs and prime ministers have deemed this insufficient cause to rid themselves of it, preferring to let the penny be and to invent higher denominations of currency—as when Edward II established the groat. Indeed, by its continued existence the penny has served notice that the value of money cannot be infinitely debased, that the monetary systems of the English-speaking world



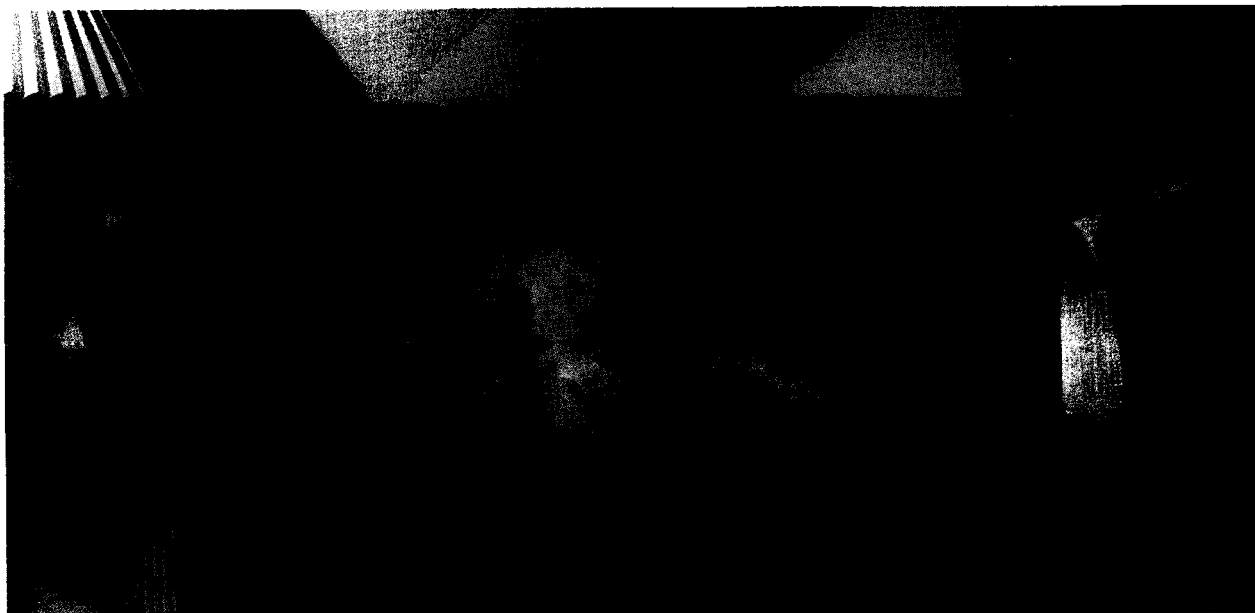
have an anchor, albeit a shifting one. As long as the penny exists, there will be things you can buy with one or two or three or four of them. Get rid of it and nothing will cost less than a nickel.

That is the economic defense of the penny. Pennies also serve important social functions. They inform millions of children who may have been exposed to nothing but textbooks that there once was a man named Lincoln who occupied a position of some importance. They are responsible for initiating millions of conversations in stores every day between people who otherwise would complete their transactions in anomic silence. From time to time these transactions are punctuated by mild bleats of satisfaction—"Wait, I have a penny!" Such moments, occurring all across the nation and around the clock, contribute modestly but directly to social comity.

Pennies, moreover, are so deeply embedded in our culture that extracting them would leave small emptinesses in the very substance of life. Pennies help to mark the stages of man. They are the first allowance we receive. Later we put them on railroad tracks, and later still in loafers, and later still in fuse boxes. Inevitably the day comes when a penny falls from the hand and one decides not to pick it up. In the mature adult this prompts a fleeting sense of contentment, for he has acknowledged the fact of his own security. We wish on pennies at fountains and wells, knowing that dimes and nickels won't work. In a pocketful of change pennies serve as an essential garnish, relieving an otherwise drab monochrome like radishes in a salad. And in our language they are called upon liberally when precepts of formidable consequence must be conveyed. "Look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves." "A penny saved is a penny earned." Thanks to exhortations like these, it may very well be that if all the pennies hoarded in bowls and jars were taken into account, the often maligned U.S. savings rate would approach that of Japan.

The elimination of the penny might afford some slight physical convenience, but the total social cost exceeds what a liberal democracy ought to countenance. It would be nothing less, one might say, than penny-wise and pound-foolish.

—Cullen Murphy



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Rebel Burmese students at Three Pagodas Pass, on the Thai border

BURMA

Life in the Hills

Students who fled the brutal crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations last year have found a refuge of sorts among Burma's ethnic insurgents

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, just before the first of the student protests in China, I happened to be in a nearby part of the world—in Burma—where another upheaval had barely died down. The Burmese upheaval closely prefigured China's convulsions. In Burma, as in China, student demonstrations challenging a corrupt and repressive dictatorship had won broad popular support and threatened to sweep away the established order, only to be brutally put down.

Burma (which now calls itself Myanmar) was a democracy in the recent past. Following independence from Britain, in 1948, the country knew a version, though not exactly a Western version, of parliamentary democracy, under Prime Minister U Nu. This lasted until 1962, when a coup staged by the chief of staff of the armed forces, General Ne Win, introduced the so-called Burmese Way to Socialism.

The Burmese Way, with its xenophobia, its quixotic quest for total economic self-sufficiency, its ruthlessness, and its ineptitude, soon reduced a land of great natural wealth and ebullience to a wretch of a nation: backward, browbeaten, and isolated. Notwithstanding an abundance of natural resources—oil, teak, precious stones, and gold, among others—Burma has become one of the poorest countries in the world. It is deeply in debt. Informed observers estimate that about half its national budget is eaten up by an endless civil war waged against ethnic minorities and Communist insurgents in the countryside. Daily life is a struggle with shortages of every kind—of food, fuel, consumer goods, industrial equipment, cash. The only functioning economy is the black-market one.

In 1987, in official statements and through hurried attempts to “liberalize” the rice trade, the government admitted, at long last, that reforms were needed. More-widespread change was rumored. The country's economy only worsened, however, and by early 1988 the increasing unrest brought on by this state of affairs led to scattered student protests in the capital city, Rangoon. In July, Ne Win suddenly announced his resignation as the ruling-party chairman. He also called for a referendum on ending single-party rule. Whether the shuffles within the junta after Ne Win's resignation speech were staged or reflected genuine inter-

nal confusion, three leaders rose in brisk succession from July to September of 1988. Meanwhile, all over the country student protesters were joined by crowds that thronged the streets of cities and towns, demanding democracy, free elections, and an end to one-party rule.

Just when it seemed that the popular will could no longer be contained, the head of government, General Saw Maung, contained it. He called in light-infantry divisions drawn from regiments specializing in counterinsurgency, which led to a bloody confrontation. Troops opened fire on unarmed crowds and searched house to house for agitators, many of whom were summarily shot. Thousands of Burmese were killed, and thousands arrested. What began as the crackup of the Ne Win regime turned instead into the worst crackdown in Burma's recent history.

FUGITIVES FROM the unrest, primarily dissident students but also some military personnel, had one important advantage over their Chinese counterparts: they had a place to go. They went by the thousands to the frontiers—to border lands that Burma shares with Bangladesh and India in the west and northwest, with China in the northeast, and with Laos and Thailand in the east and southeast. Along these borders ethnic insurgents have for forty years been in rebellion against the central Burmese government, making this struggle Asia's oldest, if least-known, civil war. Trapped between Burma proper and her sovereign neighbors, many of these minorities have set up autonomous governments and turned the territories they control into mini-states.

At the height of the dissidents' exodus from Rangoon, Mandalay, and elsewhere, as many as 8,000 to 10,000 young people lit out for the frontiers. Many have returned home by now: of these, some have gone underground, some have been arrested and, reportedly, tortured, and some have simply disappeared. Of those that remain on the frontiers—about 4,000—a few have been killed in battle and others have died of malaria and other tropical diseases. An increasing number have sought refugee status in neighboring countries. The Rangoon government has minimized the significance of the

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student guerrillas, claiming that they pose little military threat. This claim is at the moment probably true. But the students' very presence among the enemy rebels is an important development. For centuries ethnic Burmese in the nation's heartland have despised the populous minority tribes along the frontiers. Now, for the first time, members of the Burman elite, with ties to urban opposition forces, are gaining intimate exposure to the hill peoples.

One third of Burma's population of roughly 40 million is made up of minority groups. They are culturally, linguistically, and religiously distinct, one from the other. The minorities occupy a third to a half of Burma's territory. (Burma is about the size of England and France combined.) These minority homelands have never been easy for a central government to subjugate, much less unify. The British colonial rulers administered these regions separately from Burma proper.

During the negotiations for independence, the British and Burman leaders persuaded most of the minorities to join the Union of Burma. But it was a patchwork agreement, in which statehood within the union was granted to some groups but denied to others, or deferred. The matter of secession was handled similarly: the Shan and Karenni states, for example, were given the right to secede after ten years, but the Kachins were specifically denied this right. Not surprisingly, within months of independence a multitude of armed insurrections by Communists and disaffected minorities broke out across the land. By 1949 rebel forces had raised their flags over most of the country, with the important exception of Rangoon. Chaos reigned until the early 1950s, when the central government managed to regain the upper hand. Since then the minorities have continued to seek some sort of autonomy through force of arms. The heaviest recent fighting has taken place along the Thai border, where the central government, strapped for cash, wants to open up land to loggers from Thailand.

THE ETHNIC MINORITY group dominant in the region opposite Thailand's Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces is the Karens, who make up about seven percent of Bur-

TOM MALINOWSKI



Learning to use an AK-47

ma's population. Since early this year Burmese government troops, frequently employing mortar shelling, have captured several major Karen rebel camps along a ten-mile stretch of border and have gained the central government its strongest foothold in the region in four decades.

The Karen National Union general headquarters is at Manerplaw, a settlement of teak and thatch bungalows on the jungled banks of the Moei River—part of the boundary between Burma and Thailand. In the dry season to reach Manerplaw from the Thai town of Mae Sot, which is about 250 miles northwest of Bangkok, requires a five-hour trek by road and river. The road journey crosses scores of shallow streams and dozens of narrow bamboo bridges. Then, from a landing that appears to be nothing more than a lumberyard, one embarks for a journey upriver.

I rode in a longboat filled with young Karen rebel soldiers carrying M-16s and trying to look fierce amid the peaceful, almost idyllic surroundings. Eventually the boat nosed up to a dock at the foot of a steep but well-worn path that led up a slope to what one Karen soldier called "the Pentagon of Free Karenland."

I had arrived at a busy time, a time of meetings. Leaders and representatives of the larger minorities—the Arakanese, the Kachin, the Karen, the Karenni, the Lahu, the Mon, the Palaung, the Pa-O, the Shan, and the

Wa—and of some dissident Burman groups had come to hold discussions about almost everything. The All-Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), the umbrella organization of students at the border, was meeting in one bungalow; the National Democratic Front (NDF), a loose alliance of the major rebel organizations, in another; the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB), a new coalition made up of the NDF and a number of other dissident organizations, inside and outside Burma, in a third. The NDF once maintained a separate pact with the Communist Party of Burma, which recently disintegrated after its ethnic-minority component overthrew the aging Burman Communist leadership and formed separate armies. While I was still struggling with the ABCs of factional politics, a DAB representative came to inform me that after my meetings with the ABSDF and the NDF, Brang Seng, the vice-chairman of the DAB and a leader of the NDF, would see me.

BRANG SENG, the leader of the Kachins, who, like the Karens, are a powerful minority group, is a self-assured politician in his early fifties. Well-informed and well-traveled, he speaks fluent English and eloquent Burmese. A former principal of a school in his native Kachin State, in northern Burma, Brang Seng is now the chairman of the Kachin Independence Organization. The organization's 8,000 soldiers control a jade-rich 15,000-square-mile area. This is the largest rebel-administered region in Burma, with its own civil administration, schools, and hospitals. This region is also associated with the international opium trade, which is one reason why the Kachin rebels have received no assistance, overt or covert, from the United States.

Once the world's largest rice exporter, Burma is now the world's largest opium exporter. Some of this opium passes through the Kachin State and is taxed by the Kachin army. (The several occupying forces in this gray area all extract revenue from a freewheeling system of taxes and tolls on opium, and the Burma Army collects a 10 percent tax as well.) From 1974 until 1988, when U.S. aid to Burma was suspended after the disturbances, the United States gave the country some

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The student camp at Thay Baw Bo, north of Three Pagodas Pass

\$5 million to \$8 million a year for a drug-eradication program, which in recent years relied heavily on herbicide-spraying.

According to people in the Shan and Kachin states, the Rangoon government has been spraying herbicides less on the poppy fields than on the food crops of the hill tribes. "The more they 'eradicate,' the more opium is grown," Brang Seng said, by way of explaining the involvement of his people in opium cultivation. "Government troops go marauding into villages, the villagers run, the troops burn down the villages. Now the villagers driven into deeper jungle and steeper mountain areas become displaced people. Because food is their immediate problem, they plant a fast-growing crop. Rice takes a year, but poppy grows in four months. So they plant opium. But these opium-growers aren't getting rich. They're looking for two meals a day. Opium should be eradicated, no question. But the only way to do it is by bringing peace to Burma."

Meanwhile, Thai efforts to initiate peace talks between the rebel minorities and the government were met by the latter with a stern rebuff: "We have already declared that there would be no more negotiations with the insurgents. We shall continue to fight them until they are totally eliminated." The improbability of eliminating the rebels is nowhere more apparent than at Manerplaw, where rebellion has taken on a permanent, homey quality. During my

visit I stayed in a guesthouse furnished with beds, pillows, mosquito nets, and a couple of heavy armchairs, and employing a cook who had apprenticed at a big hotel in Rangoon.

ONE NIGHT I was invited to dinner by the Karen leader, General Bo Mya, who commands a force of combat troops and village police that is said to number 8,000. Short and solidly built, with a belly the size of a prize watermelon, Bo Mya seems to enjoy his image as a direct, uncomplicated man with no claims to sophistication, no interest in speaking English, and no time for table manners. We sat with about ten others at a long table set up in the head office, while a battalion of orderlies hovered about. The menu featured cabbage soup, duck in oil, turkey in oil, duck eggs fried in oil, cauliflower and chicken in oil, and fish paste. My host ate with gusto, pointedly ignoring any attempts at small talk. He sucked, picked his teeth, and belched with authority. Afterward, swishing his hands in a bowl of water brought to his side by two young women, he turned to me with the air of a host proposing an after-dinner entertainment and offered to show me some prisoners of war whom he had been trying unsuccessfully to get the International Red Cross to take off his hands. (POWs are a rare and expensive liability in this particular civil war.) In the end I had to leave before seeing the prisoners, but I did

get to spend the night at the White House, as the Karens call the general's residence.

The stars were out, the crickets were out, and the jungle itself seemed to be panting as we climbed into a longboat: the general, his six bodyguards, my guide, and I. Arriving at a landing fifteen minutes later, we piled into a pickup truck that took us through the black night to the general's bungalow, a slightly refined version of the ones at Manerplaw. A ghostly flicker illuminated one room as we climbed the stairs. It came from a television screen surrounded by a group of teenagers. *Full Metal Jacket* was being shown on a videocassette recorder.

The general's wife—cheerful, plump, and munching betel nut—came to greet us. We sat on the plank floor of the living room, where the only chair was for the use of the general, and where the teenage army, after the movie, would sleep. Members of the 6th Brigade came along for a war council. They had changed from their uniforms into the long skirts called *longyis* that most Burmese wear. On the walls were an assortment of calendars and posters (some still in plastic wrap): Bible scenes, a Swiss chalet, a Hallmark sunset, a Japanese garden, a Dutch garden, the King and Queen of Thailand. And there was a cuckoo clock, which played "Freude, Schöner Götterfunken" and featured little dancing figures in dirndls and lederhosen. It was a pleasant incongruity, like one version of the Karen national anthem, which is sung to the tune of "Lili Marlene." Early the next morning no teenagers remained in the living room: the group had risen at dawn for their dry-season daily routine of collecting thatch from the hills. But Bo Mya was sitting on the floor, feeding a bottle to his infant grandson, who had been up all night with a fever. The baby's father, Bo Mya's son-in-law, had been killed in battle a few months before.

Battles and bottles, cuckoo clocks and war councils—the decades-old rebellion, with its routine of killing and being killed, had become a way of life. The front had become, simply, home.

FARTHER DOWN THE Thai border, at Three Pagodas Pass, a border crossing about 180 miles northwest of Bangkok, near the River Kwai, some 300 students had embarked on

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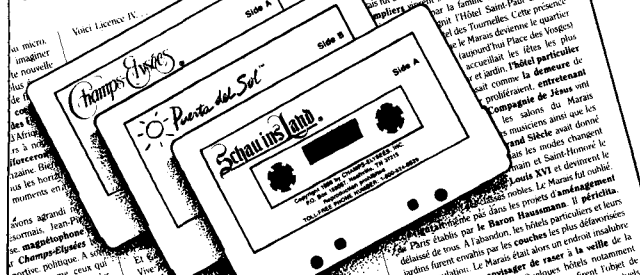
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TRANSCRIPT





such a way of life. Emerging into the afternoon haze from their thatch-and-bamboo huts—marching and charging about in the killing heat with sticks instead of guns, slogging through mud in bare feet or rubber flipflops—these would-be guerrillas brought to mind not so much a training camp as a refugee camp. They were eager, however, to tell visitors that food, water, and medicines were not what was most on their minds. At a meeting between students and two representatives of a Catholic relief agency, with whom I'd shared a ride from Bangkok, the camp leader, a slight, soft-spoken fellow with soulful eyes and the wispy beard of an Oriental scholar, answered questions about the camp's basic requirements almost distractedly. The relief people asked about the food situation, the health situation, and so on. What did the students need most? "An F-16," said one of the dozen or so bystanders who had squeezed their way into the hut to observe the interview.

The students are not heavily armed, to say the least. For many, the struggle against the regime has boiled down to a struggle for survival. Those students who have seen combat have done so primarily by joining the ranks of the minority insurgents.

"Oh, those kids! What trouble they gave at first!" said a toothless old matriarch in a Karen village, recalling the early days of the student invasion. "Feeding them was no joke. The way we all pitched in, taking turns day and night! The chopping and the frying and the washing! The piles and pots of food that got eaten! And the little fools had the gall to complain! Not out loud—they wouldn't dare. But I overheard whispers about how our food wasn't up to standard. The superior Burmese! I said, Look here, you little sons of bitches, you come here with nothing more than you!"—here she went through a rich array of synonyms for the male and female sex organs—"and you belittle our food? That shut them up. But we liked feeding them. They're kids. Who begrudges feeding kids?"

After huts had been built and a system of food procurement and distribution set up, other tensions arose. "We give them shelter, we feed them," said a Karen liaison officer in Mae Sot. "We hardly have enough for ourselves! 'We

want military training,' they say. So we give them training. 'We want to fight,' they say. So we send them to the front. But when the Burmese start pounding on them, they turn and run into our arms, and we have to stand behind them, so to speak."

Few of the students I talked to were willing to admit to having had any serious conflicts with their minority hosts. The student leaders in particular were eager in their expressions of gratitude for Karen help. But a young Burmese volunteer worker at one of the camps told me, "They don't dare say it, but they're still pretty scared of what the Karens might do to them. Rumors spread from camp to camp about how the Karens have been using students for slave labor and cannon fodder instead of training them, and that creates even more distrust and fear."

Students who have crossed the border into Thailand are also at the mercy of Thai politicians—a fact made painfully plain a year ago, when about 300 students were returned to Burmese authorities under a short-lived official "repatriation" program. The move had everything to do with trade negotiations taking place between Thailand and Burma at the time. Not much is known about the fate of these deportees, or of the many more who have since been pushed back into Burma by Thai officials.

For the thousands of students now remaining at the border, setbacks multiply daily. Worn out by the futility and hardship of life in the bush—no one escapes malaria, for a start—increasing numbers have crossed over into Thai towns to seek work as illegal immigrants or to appeal for refugee status.

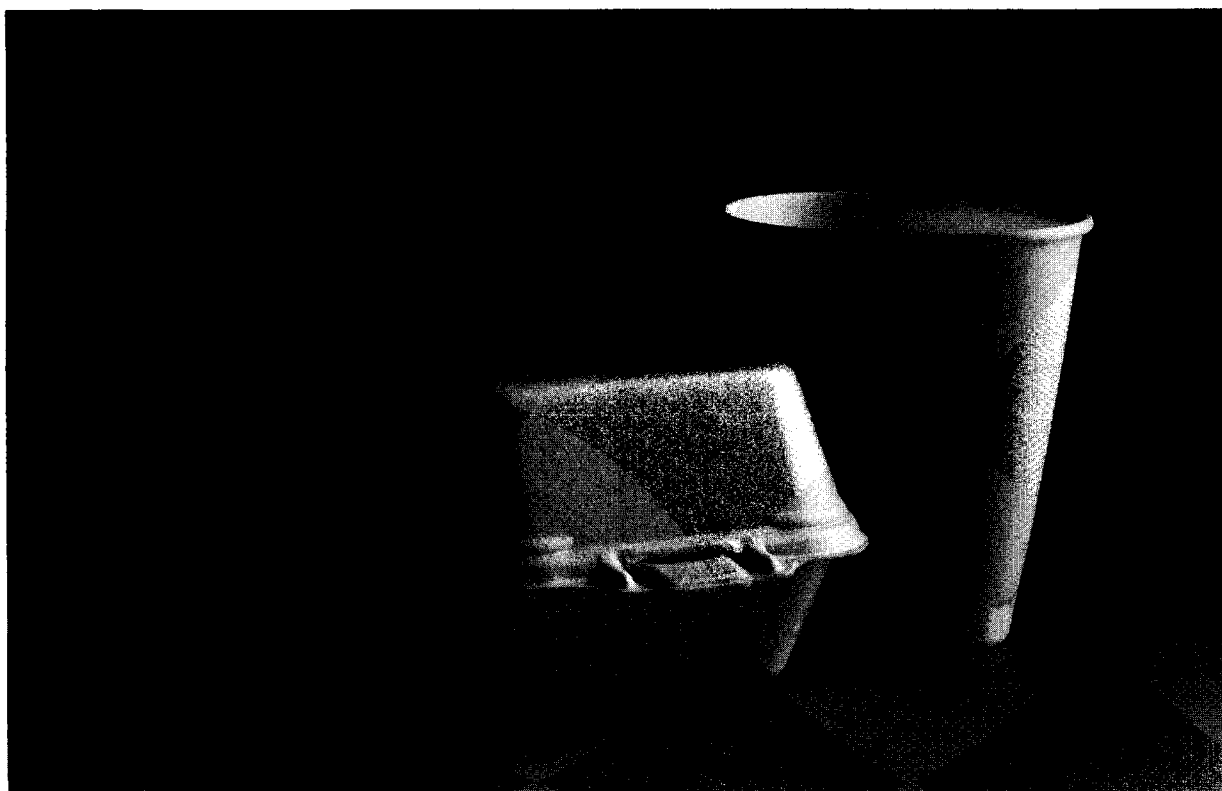
Reluctant to set yet another refugee quota, the United States has been slow to accept Burmese refugees. "The students are not that badly off," a State Department official in Washington says. "They have de facto if not de jure residency in Thailand." But under congressional pressure this attitude may be changing into a more sympathetic one.

As for the Thai authorities, in light of the newly flourishing trade between Thailand and Burma, there is reason to expect that they will continue to act as if their interest in human rights were not nearly so acute as their interest in logging and fishing rights.

SOON AFTER MY trip to Three Pagodas Pass, I boarded a truck bound for another student camp, farther north at Thay Baw Bo, where conditions, I'd heard, were considerably more dismal. At dawn the next morning a heavy mist parted to reveal a village of huts with disintegrating thatch or roofs of blue plastic sheets in shreds. And yet the students trained and trained, running laps around a clearing that looked like a huge septic field, doing jumping jacks, scaling makeshift ladders, crawling on their bellies, and playing at war with astounding energy. The training officers who shouted out orders were former members of one branch or another of the Burma Defense Services. Watching these exercises from a hut were three youngish *pongyis*, or Burmese monks. The *pongyis* were very much in evidence during the strikes and demonstrations last year, shouting slogans, shaking fists, waving banners, and helping and hiding student activists.

As the day wore on, it struck me that despite the squalor—the appalling stench from the open holes in the ground that served as latrines, the blighted huts, the shivering victims of malaria and typhoid—and the sense of wasted effort and futility, there was a certain good humor to the scene. True to student tradition, there was also continual conversation about politics: about the unlikely prospects for elections, and about opposition leaders in Rangoon.

The most prominent opposition figure is Aung San Suu Kyi, the forty-four-year-old Oxford-educated daughter of General Aung San, who brokered Burma's independence only to be assassinated on its eve. Openly critical and defiant of the current regime (she has been placed under house arrest), the charismatic Aung San Suu Kyi is the secretary-general of the National League for Democracy, a loose coalition of parties that claims more than a million members. The government has announced plans to hold elections next spring, but nobody believes that the elections will be free and fair, if they come about at all. The terms of the new election law could disqualify from candidacy most of the major contenders among the opposition (who in any event happen to be under arrest); and there are no provisions for neutral supervision of the elections. Even if



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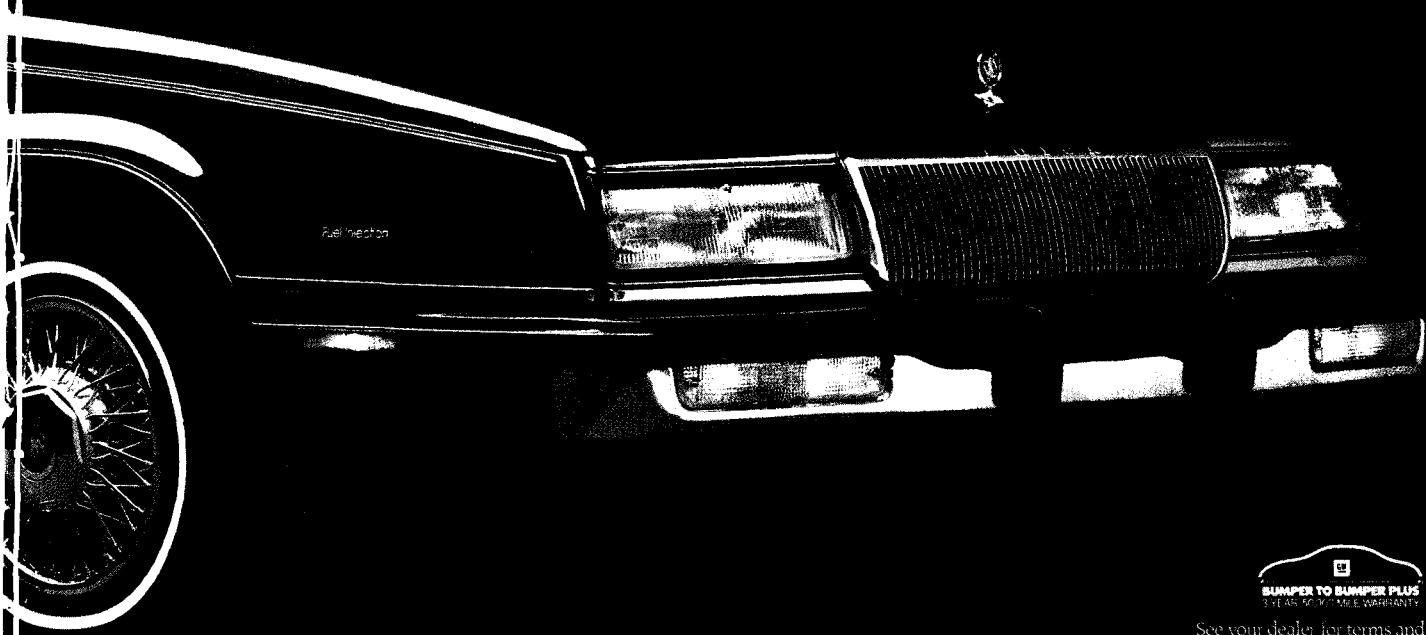
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elections do take place, there are no assurances of a transfer of power, since these elections would be not for a parliament but for an unspecified assembly charged with drafting a new constitution, which would then have to be approved. Until then—however long it takes—the military would remain in power. In a new round of repression begun in July, more than a thousand dissidents have been jailed, and many dissidents have been tortured to death.

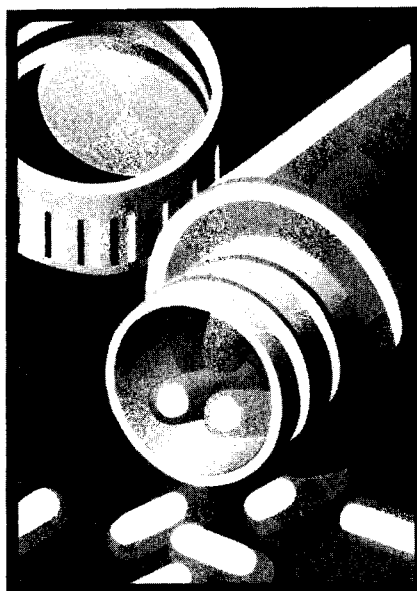
Besides the elections, shoptalk at Thay Baw Bo touched on urban versus jungle guerrilla tactics (most students favored blowing up military bases and key installations in the towns, or assassinating high-ranking army officers, over conducting traditional jungle warfare) and on what it would take to topple Rangoon ("Just an F-16 and a million dollars, no more!"). One of the leaders, a former chemistry teacher, said, "America has always preached democracy. But now that we are fighting so hard to get democracy, we can't get any help. They help the contras; why can't they help us?" It was true, they admitted, that Congress had made strong statements in support of the "democratic aspirations of the Burmese." It was true that Washington had cut off aid to the Burmese regime—about \$14 million worth in 1988, half of it for development programs, half for narcotics control. And owing in large measure to the efforts of Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Representative Stephen Solarz, Congress has authorized a small amount of humanitarian aid for the students. But the United States has not provided the wherewithal for overthrowing the current regime. Nor, for that matter, has any other nation.

An American economist who is well informed about Burmese affairs recently said to me, "There has always been something about the Burman that wants an uncle, someone on the outside, to do something he can't get done. But the time has come now when he has to do for himself."

THOSE WORKING for a change of regime in Burma, perhaps even for democracy—the opposition leaders, the underground activists, the fugitive students, the minority armies—are doing for themselves. But a

happier lot for Burma depends on more than self-reliance. It depends largely on whether the many groups involved in the opposition effort are all propelled along the same road. Unity has never been a strong suit of the Burmese. The only example of unified strength, sadly, is the Burma Army, which, despite rumors of pervasive demoralization and internal strife, remains a force to be reckoned with. It may be, then, that a dangerous, contingent life in the hills, which has long been the reality for the Karens, the Kachins, and others, is the future that awaits the fugitive students as well.

—Wendy Law-Yone



MEDICINE

High-Risk Pain Pills

Though their use is unregulated, many common pain remedies can be dangerous, particularly if combined with alcohol or other drugs

EVEN THOSE OF US who scrupulously monitor the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the water we drink pay scant attention to the over-the-counter (OTC) analgesics we take—the aspirin, Tylenol, Advil, Nuprin, and scores of others that are available in drugstores and supermarkets. And yet these are potent chemicals.

They can be harmful, even deadly, if used too often, in combination with one another, or by the wrong people at the wrong time.

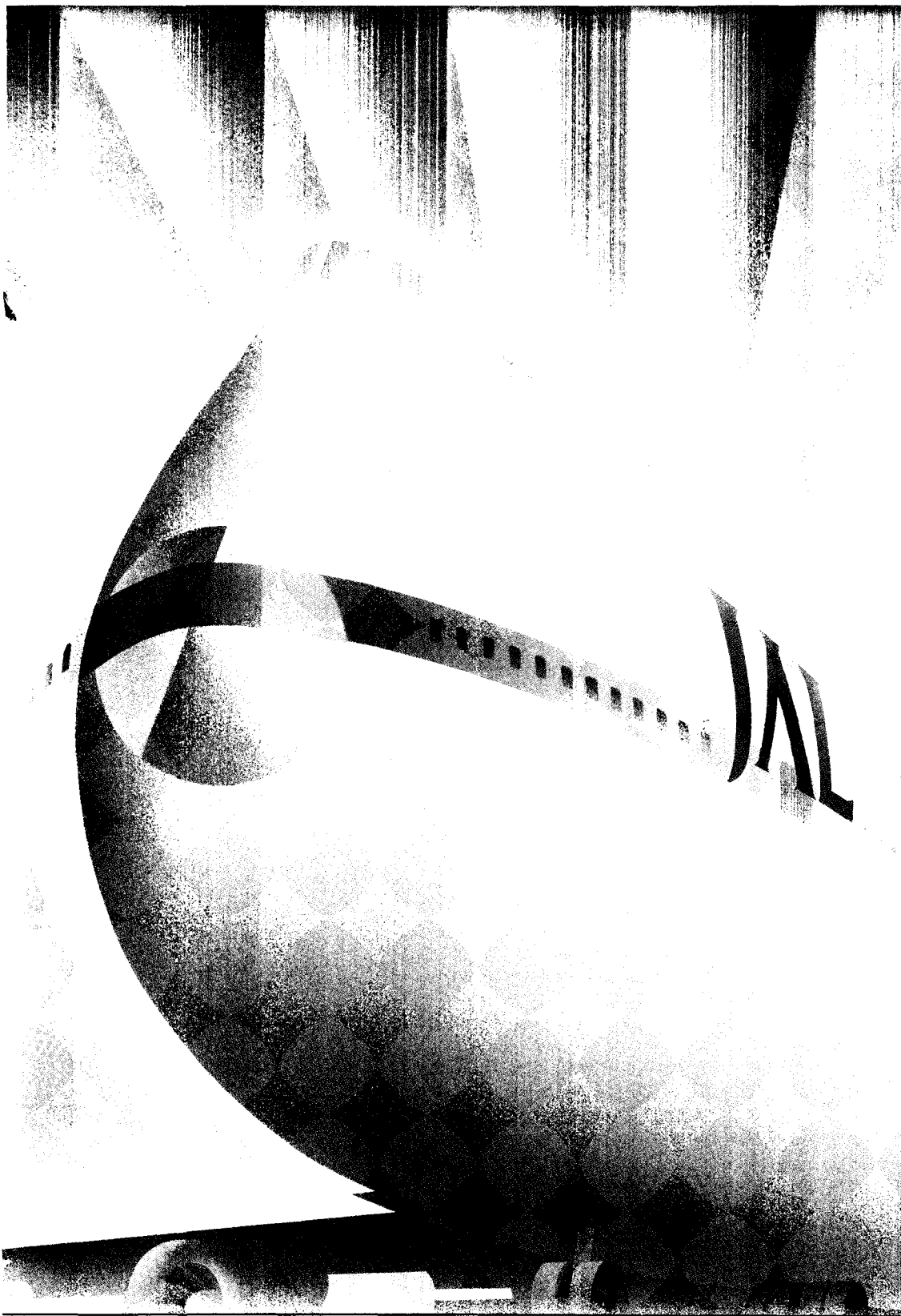
We don't hear much about the dangers of OTC analgesics, or pain pills, in part because the damage they cause—most frequently deterioration of the liver and kidneys and ulceration of the stomach—is often associated with existing conditions in the people they affect.

Alcoholics, for example, are particularly susceptible to liver damage when they take even moderate doses of acetaminophen, the most common brand of which is Tylenol. But alcoholics and heavy drinkers are likely to have liver damage anyway, so pathologists have difficulty separating the liver damage caused by chronic alcoholism from that caused by acetaminophen.

Kidney disease, which develops slowly, is linked with long-term use of combination pain-killers. Early formulations were composed of aspirin, phenacetin, and caffeine. Current formulations, such as Excedrin and Vanquish, substitute acetaminophen for phenacetin, and the link with kidney disease is less well documented. By the time a habitual user of these ordinary pain-killers winds up in the urologist's office, the causes of his or her kidney damage will be difficult to establish.

Ordinary people with ordinary ills can unknowingly harm themselves with pain pills taken as their manufacturers recommend.

Maurice C. Jauchler, Jr., a New Orleans electronics and communications specialist, had been taking Extra Strength Tylenol for several years to control the chronic pain he suffered from fractured ankles and a fractured wrist. He never exceeded the recommended dosage, according to his wife, Silvia. In October of 1983 Jauchler, in his early forties, got the flu. Looking for something compatible with the medicine he was already taking, but with ingredients to alleviate his congestion, he picked up a bottle of Maximum Strength Tylenol Sinus Medication. For five days he added the sinus medication to his regimen. Each Maximum Strength Tylenol Sinus Medication tablet contains 500 milligrams of acetaminophen. Each Extra Strength Tylenol also contains 500 mg of acetaminophen. While Jauchler was simul-



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taneously trying to clear up his congestion and treat his ankle pain, he took at least two or three of each pill daily and some days as many as eight of each—sixteen pills in all, or eight grams of acetaminophen. (According to the Rocky Mountain Poison Control Center, amounts of acetaminophen in the 7.5 gram range are considered toxic.) According to Silvia Jauchler, her husband never exceeded the maximum recommended doses.

At the end of this five-day period Jauchler turned yellow and was rushed to the local hospital. He had severe liver damage, which his doctors described as Tylenol-induced hepatitis. By taking the two OTC medications simultaneously, Jauchler had unknowingly overdosed on acetaminophen. In 1984 the Jauchlers sued McNeil Labs, the manufacturers of Tylenol.

Jauchler's condition continued to deteriorate—"a slow, agonizing death," his wife calls it—and in July of 1987 he died. The case went to trial in 1988. Silvia Jauchler lost. The case against McNeil Labs is being appealed.

Reports on the dangers of OTC pain pills are curiously absent from mass-circulation newspapers and magazines, except in the case of dramatic deaths clearly attributable to a single suicidal overdose. Fatal incidents are likely to increase, however, because aggressive marketing by drug manufacturers has made OTC remedies popular, and consumers tend not to know about the side effects of these drugs. Underreporting of their use is also a problem. Patients receiving prescriptions forget to tell their doctors they're taking OTC drugs. Some doctors neglect to ask.

IN THE TWENTIETH century we have largely conquered run-of-the-mill pain. Without deliberation or prayer we can take a small white pill—available at any grocery, pharmacy, or supermarket—and within forty-five minutes find relief from headache, backache, toothache, cramps, and other sources of temporary distress.

No one is sure exactly how these chemicals work, though the broad strokes are clear. The anesthetics that are used in dentistry and surgery block the transmission of all neural impulses in small, finite areas (local anesthesia) or in the body as a whole (general anes-

thesia). Prescription analgesics, mainly narcotics, work on certain nerve cells in the central nervous system—the spine and brain—to block transmission of pain. OTC analgesics mainly suppress prostoglandins, chemical messengers released at the site of pain. Each of these types of pain-killers is different, but each interferes with the pathway from the site of pain to the brain.

The dozens of OTC analgesics available contain just three pain-killing ingredients: aspirin, acetaminophen, and ibuprofen. Aspirin is commonly sold in 325 mg tablets, sometimes buffered or coated to make it less irritating to the stomach. Acetaminophen is the active ingredient in Tylenol, Panadol, Anacin 3, and Datril, among other preparations. Ibuprofen is the active ingredient in Advil, Nuprin, Medipren, Ibuprin, Trendar, Haltran, and Midol 200. Other OTC analgesics are made up of combinations of these three ingredients and, sometimes, caffeine, which is thought to intensify the analgesic effect, though tests have been inconclusive.

Aspirin has been used to treat pain for at least twenty-three centuries. Hippocrates knew that the leaves and bark of the willow tree, which contain salicin, a naturally occurring form of aspirin, relieved pain. He had his women patients chew willow leaves during childbirth.

In 1893 Felix Hoffman, who worked for Friedrich Bayer & Company, in Germany, simplified a method for manufacturing acetylsalicylic acid, the synthesized chemical we know as aspirin. In 1900 it was introduced as a powder in the United States. By 1915 Bayer had learned to mass-produce tablets. Americans now consume 16,000 tons of aspirin tablets a year. We take it for pain relief, to lower fever, and to reduce inflammation. For millions of Americans with arthritis, aspirin is the drug of choice.

Acetaminophen was first synthesized in the late nineteenth century, but was not widely used until the 1950s, when it was marketed as an alternative to aspirin. Aspirin can irritate the stomach, especially when taken in the large quantities needed to produce its anti-inflammatory effects. Acetaminophen rarely irritates the stomach. It seems to affect pain transmission in the central nervous system

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rather than at the injury site, as aspirin and ibuprofen do, but the mechanism is poorly understood. It alleviates headache, toothache, muscular ache, and so on. It lowers fever but does not reduce inflammation, and thus is not as effective as aspirin for arthritis sufferers.

Ibuprofen, which works much the way aspirin does, was developed as an alternative analgesic with anti-inflammatory properties. It is the main ingredient in a prescription pain-killer called Motrin, which is available in a variety of strengths, delivering up to 800 mg of ibuprofen. In 1984 ibuprofen became available in OTC forms, such as Advil and Nuprin, each of which contains 200 mg of ibuprofen per pill. OTC ibuprofen is used mainly by arthritis sufferers and weekend athletes to reduce inflammation and muscular pain. It's not quite as effective an anti-inflammatory drug as aspirin, but neither is it as irritating to the stomach. Ibuprofen is particularly effective in treating menstrual pain.

These familiar pain-killers work quickly and effectively. But a growing number of physicians, pharmacologists, and toxicologists wish we knew more about these drugs—more about the down side of pain relief. Reports of patients injured by OTC analgesics routinely appear in medical journals. For example:

In Florida a thirty-nine-year-old man developed a bad pain in his groin and started taking Extra Strength Tylenol. An alcoholic, he consumed about 60 grams of alcohol a day—the equivalent of four and a half cans of beer or most of a bottle of wine. After six days of this combination—alcohol and acetaminophen—he felt very ill, was nauseated and vomiting, and was admitted to Miami Veterans Hospital. The pain in his abdomen was diagnosed as a hernia, but his doctors found another, even more alarming problem. His liver had been partially destroyed by a condition called acetaminophen-induced severe hepatic necrosis.

In Pennsylvania a very sick and confused sixty-six-year-old woman was taken by her husband to the local hospital emergency room. She was nauseated, couldn't eat, could barely hear, and was in a state of agitation. The hospital staff knew the woman, because she'd been treated there about a month earlier. On that occasion she

had been given several medicines to take at home, including Easprin, a prescription brand of aspirin that is coated to lessen stomach irritation. Each Easprin tablet contained 975 mg of aspirin, or as much as three tablets of regular aspirin. The woman had arthritis. At home she took eight Easprins a day, or 7.8 grams. Emergency-room personnel suspected an aspirin overdose, of which deafness, dizziness, and disorientation are symptoms. They tested the salicylate level in her blood and confirmed that she had been poisoned by aspirin. The woman remained disoriented and confused, according to her husband, and never again regained full mental function.

In West Virginia a previously healthy forty-three-year-old man came down with the flu. He took aspirin for a few days and still felt generally miserable and achy. His neighborhood pharmacist suggested he try Advil, since ibuprofen is particularly effective for muscular aches. The man took three Advils a day for two days. He continued to feel under the weather. For the next three days he discontinued Advil, switching to alternate doses of aspirin and acetaminophen. He developed interstitial nephritis and acute kidney failure—which his medical team attributed to ibuprofen taken in combination with aspirin.

AS THE VARIETIES OF OTC pain pills on the market proliferate, the problems associated with their misuse are causing increasing concern. "Physicians and regulators have a joke about aspirin," says Judith Jones, a Washington, D. C., internist, educator, and clinical pharmacologist. "If it were up for review by the [Food and Drug Administration] today, it would never make it." Jones has been an FDA regulator and a consultant to the drug industry. "The patient-care system would be overwhelmed without these products," she says. "But the problem is that sometimes they're taken too often, too casually, and with too little understanding of how they work."

Those at greatest risk, Jones says, are chronic users, especially elderly people who use aspirin in combination with other OTC drugs, lose track of how much medication they've taken, and are socially isolated and malnourished. Jones's mission in drug educa-

tion is to get pain-pill users to understand what are the appropriate uses of each drug and what are the risks that each carries.

Aspirin alleviates pain, reduces inflammation, and lowers fever, but it makes your stomach bleed, and can cause anemia and peptic ulcers, which are occasionally fatal. Some people are allergic to aspirin. It has been implicated in Reye syndrome, a rare but serious disease in children and adolescents.

Acetaminophen doesn't make your stomach bleed, but neither does it reduce inflammation. It has not been associated with Reye syndrome and so is a good choice for children with fever. It doesn't do much for arthritis. When taken in large quantities, it can lead to serious damage to the kidneys and liver.

Ibuprofen is less irritating to the stomach than aspirin, but not quite as effective at reducing swelling. People who are allergic to aspirin are likely to be allergic to ibuprofen. When drug manufacturers proposed the OTC use of ibuprofen, in the early eighties, some FDA panelists objected because of the drug's apparent link to kidney failure. Numerous reports of kidney disease attributed to OTC ibuprofen have appeared since the introduction of Advil and Nuprin in 1984. Apparently the FDA does not consider these reports alarming enough to restrict the use of ibuprofen as an OTC drug.

But many kidney specialists are concerned. Although ibuprofen commands only about 15 percent of the pain-pill market, its share is expected to grow dramatically during the next few decades. During that same period the percentage of seniors in the U. S. population will significantly increase. Twelve percent of Americans were over sixty-five in 1985; in just thirty-five years 20 percent will be, according to Census Bureau projections. Old people have old kidneys. Old kidneys are inefficient kidneys, less able to resist the ravages of infection and of potentially harmful chemicals like ibuprofen. Some specialists see the growing use of OTC ibuprofen as a pharmacological time bomb.

The clinicians most concerned by the use of OTC analgesics tend to fall into three categories. One group consists of physicians whose patients take a lot of OTC pain pills and report a lot



of adverse effects. The second group consists of pharmacologists and toxicologists who study the chemistry of drugs and their effects on the body. The third group consists of medical specialists—kidney doctors, liver doctors, emergency-room physicians—who see patients suffering specifically from the adverse effects of OTC analgesics.

Kidney specialists, acting in concert with public-health professionals, were first to call national attention to the adverse effects of APC tablets, which were widely used from the mid-1950s through the 1970s. APC tablets—for example, Empirin, the original formula—were a combination analgesic composed of aspirin, phenacetin, and caffeine. They were used by millions of Americans, especially women, as a headache remedy. In the late 1950s kidney specialists noted a relatively sudden and disturbing swell in the number of women patients who had no previous history of kidney disease. Doctors closely questioned these patients—many of them otherwise healthy young and middle-aged wom-

en. Phenacetin was strongly implicated as the culprit. Typically, APC users had not exceeded the recommended dosage, but they'd taken the pills every day. In 1983 phenacetin was banned from the market.

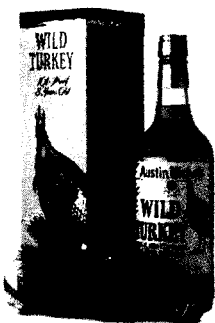
Though today's analgesic combinations don't seem quite as toxic to the kidneys, acetaminophen—which is now used instead of phenacetin in analgesic combinations such as Excedrin and Vanquish—is chemically related to phenacetin. In the body 90 percent of phenacetin metabolizes to acetaminophen.

Headache powders, widely advertised and liberally used in the southeastern United States, are also mainly aspirin, acetaminophen, and caffeine. They are used chiefly by factory workers, who get a lot of headaches. Vardaman M. Buckalew, Jr., M.D., a professor of medicine and physiology and the chief of nephrology at the Bowman Gray School of Medicine, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, has been observing the effects of headache powders for years. He has written or co-

authored several articles about his findings in journals such as *Medicine*, the *American Journal of Kidney Diseases*, and *The New England Journal of Medicine*. Buckalew sees patients at Bowman Gray's internal-medicine clinic and at North Carolina Baptist Hospital. In a soft, mellifluous drawl, he describes his oblique method of compiling a medical history, particularly one that involves analgesic abuse.

"You don't ask people if they take analgesics. About a third of them would probably deny it. They're not proud of it. Instead you ask, 'Do you have any trouble with headaches, arthritis, or your stomach?' And when they say yes, I ask what they take for these problems. Sometimes the spouse will say, 'Oh, yeah, she takes hundreds of powders a week.'"

Headache powders have a long history in the factories—particularly the textile factories—of the southeastern United States. They used to be distributed free of charge by textile companies, and were wheeled through the workplace on conveyances called



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"dope carts" by the workers. Today workers buy their own. "Goody's, BC, and Stanback [which is all aspirin] are the names of the big ones," Buckalew says. "They come in a box with lots of little wax-paper envelopes. People pour them down their throats, or take them with Coke."

In North Carolina the prevalence of analgesic nephropathy, chronic kidney disease caused by analgesic abuse, is twice that in the rest of the country—probably because of the difference in analgesic consumption, according to Buckalew. Taking analgesic compounds predisposes the kidney to infection. "The effect is cumulative," Buckalew says. "The equivalent of four to six tablets a day for three to five years is the threshold above which some people will develop kidney disease."

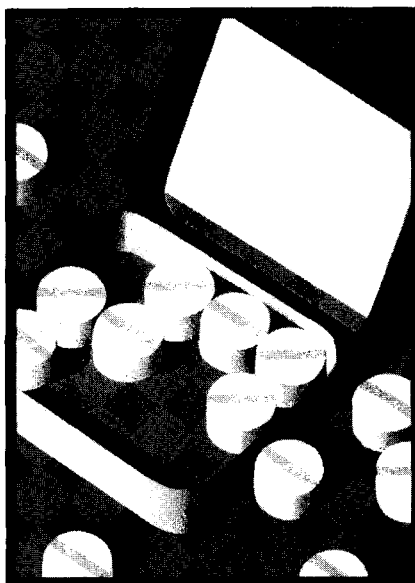
Habitual use of acetaminophen is likely to damage the kidney, though no one knows exactly where the danger point lies. More-precise information is available about acute acetaminophen poisoning, the ingestion of a single overdose.

Americans tend to think of Tylenol and other acetaminophen-containing drugs as safer than aspirin, a potentially misleading perception that concerns many emergency-room physicians and toxicologists. In 1980 Raymond D. Harbison, who is now the director of the Center for Environmental Toxicology at the University of Florida, wrote an article for *Chemical Dependencies: Behavioral and Biomedical Issues* which demonstrated that acetaminophen is no safer than aspirin where overdose is concerned. "People just don't realize that you can die from one dose," Harbison says. Because Tylenol is promoted as being safer than aspirin, adolescents will swallow a bottle of Tylenol in a "suicidal gesture," not realizing that they are genuinely risking death. "With aspirin we can treat the acidosis [increased acidity of the tissues and blood]. But with acetaminophen the drug's metabolite irreversibly binds to the liver."

The amount of acetaminophen in one twenty-five-pill bottle of Extra Strength Tylenol, 12.5 grams, can kill you, Harbison says. Glutathione, the substance in the liver that normally protects it from poisoning, is destroyed by acetaminophen in large doses. An antidote to acetaminophen poisoning

is known, but it has to be administered within twelve hours. But whereas a suicidal person overdosing on aspirin feels very sick, someone who swallows a bottle of Tylenol may experience almost no immediate perceptible effects. It can take three or four days for an acetaminophen victim to feel bad enough to seek medical help. By the time he makes it to the emergency ward, irreversible damage has been done. Liver failure can take place within a day or after years of suffering.

OTC-analgesic labels say little about the dangers of ibuprofen for people with kidney problems. Nor do they clearly explain the potential organ



damage that can result from combining OTC analgesics. Combination painkillers that contain aspirin, acetaminophen, and caffeine are presented as being more effective than any one analgesic. But according to Buckalew, combinations are unlikely to be more effective and may be more dangerous, because of chemical interactions. Caffeine has a particularly insidious role in all this: it may intensify a product's analgesic effect, but if consumers stop taking it, the cessation gives them headaches. So they don't. The longer people take headache powders or combination tablets, the greater their risk.

Combination analgesics are designed less for pain-killing effectiveness than for marketing effectiveness. Since OTC pain pills contain just three effective ingredients, drug companies devise exotic combinations of active

and inactive ingredients in order to qualify for a patent. A new patent justifies a new product, new claims, new markets, and increased profits.

THE FDA HAS BEEN trying to establish guidelines for OTC analgesics since the early seventies. But the huge federal bureaucracy that evolved to gather information has been sluggish, and the pharmaceutical industry has provided a steady barrage of experts to resist FDA regulation. In addition, the grandfathered status of existing OTC analgesics has limited the FDA's effectiveness.

Aspirin had been on the market for seventy-five years when federal regulators decided to take a look at it. Acetaminophen, on the market since 1955, quickly gained widespread acceptance among doctors and consumers. Ibuprofen, a prescription drug from 1974 to 1984, came through a regulatory side door, rather than in by the front door, as a new drug.

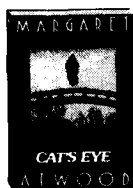
Our national appetite for fast pain relief has produced sales of \$1.7 billion a year for the manufacturers of OTC pain pills. These manufacturers encourage consumers to regard their product as "safe." But safe compared with what? As Judith Jones points out, an imbalance exists between advertising and consumer education. A heating pad, neck stretches, or rest might relieve a headache better than a pain pill.

For millions of Americans, OTC pain pills can be more dangerous than the aches and pains they dull. They pose risks for the elderly, adolescents, the confused and depressed, and those with asthma or kidney and liver disorders. They pose risks for those of us who pop as few as two or three a day, if we do so regularly.

You won't die from taking an aspirin or two once a month. You probably won't even get an ulcer from taking two or three aspirins every day, but you increase the risk that you will. You probably won't destroy your liver if you drink and take an occasional acetaminophen. But if you drink a few drinks a day, every day, and take acetaminophen, you're increasing the risk. If you're predisposed to kidney disease and take ibuprofen, you may not wind up on dialysis, but you're more likely to than if you hadn't taken ibuprofen at all.

—Lynda Morgenroth

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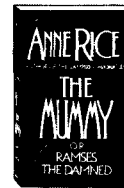
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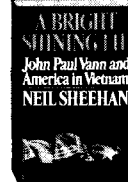


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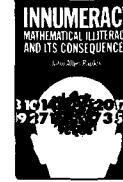
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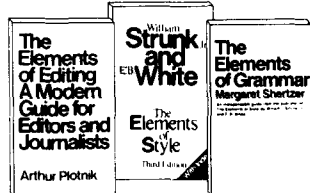
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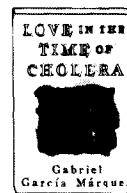
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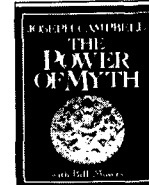
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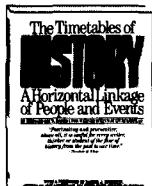
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Let's dig a little deeper into the notion that much of our garbage is made up of plastics.

America's growing waste problem is monumental. We generate 160 million tons of garbage a year.

Our nation's landfills are being filled up. In five years 2,000 of our remaining 6,000 landfills will be closed.

A lot of well-intentioned solutions are being offered. One is that foam plastics, plastic bottles and plastic packaging should be banned.

The fact is that plastics make up less than 8%, by weight, of our nation's waste. Paper and paperboard make up about 36%, glass and metal about 9% each, all by weight. Plastics are naturally lighter, but still, when compressed, account for only about 20% by volume.

If plastics were banned, the need for packaging wouldn't go away. The idea is to substitute other materials which are assumed to be biodegradable, so a landfill would take longer to become full. Studies show, however, that paper and other materials decompose so slowly in today's landfills that the lives of the landfills are not extended.

Recycling must play a part.

In addition to environmentally secure landfills, and more state-of-the-art waste-to-energy incinerators, we believe that a significant answer to America's waste problem lies in recycling. Everything recyclable should be recycled. Yard waste. Paper. Metal cans. Glass bottles. And plastics.

Although plastics recycling is in its infancy, plastics are potentially more recyclable than alternative packaging materials.

In South Carolina, one company recycles 100 million pounds of 2-liter plastic soft drink bottles a year into everything from fiberfill for ski parkas to scouring pads to automobile distributor caps.

In Chicago, another company processes 2 million plastic milk jugs a year into thousands of boards of "plastic lumber" for boat docks, decking, park benches and fences.

In Tennessee, another company processes plastic containers into bathtubs, shower stalls and sinks.

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We're sponsoring a demonstration recycling program in New York State showing that used polystyrene foam food service containers from schools and restaurants can be recycled into products like insulation board for commercial construction, cafeteria trays and home and office products.

We're participating in a consortium with other major plastics manufacturers which will support construction of regional recycling plants as part of a nationwide attempt to increase the recycling of polystyrene.

In Portland, Oregon, we renovated a 10-acre environmental learning center with a new wetlands walkway, signs, kiosks and benches made from recycled plastics partially collected from local recycling programs.

We're encouraging the start-up of new plastic recycling efforts, we're helping to find new ways to collect and sort recyclables, and supporting efforts to create markets for products made from recycled plastics.

At Amoco Chemical, we believe we're only beginning to see the benefits of recycling. In the not-too-distant future, it can turn our solid waste from a national problem into a national resource.

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THE ORIGINS OF THE COWBOY BOOT

BY ROLAND SODOWSKY

THE FIRST United States settlers in the Texas Occident were from New Hampshire. They were fruit-and-nut gatherers of English and Scottish descent who had for many centuries worn high, wide-topped boots in which to drop their food as they gathered it. This tradition was continued in the Occident, where a gatherer's specialty could usually be ascertained by the color of his boot tops, since over a period of years the seeping juices of the fruit and nuts stained the leather. Green mesquite beans, for example, produced a bright chartreuse color, which is still popular among cowboys today; dry mesquite beans produced a rich mahogany stain, darker than that of pecans; a rosy pink-red stain, also still popular, was produced by prickly pears and blood.

Many puzzled historians have noted that the Texas Occident boot resembles the contours of the human foot about as much as bandannas do bananas. Searching for a reason why anyone would commit such violence on his own feet, some historians have mistakenly assumed that the Texas Occident boot was worn by devoutly religious cowboys as a form of penitence, like flagellation. Its severe discomfort, however, may be traced to a singular chain of events involving two men, Angus Macleoud and Arturo Shumacher II.

Macleoud was the first bootmaker in the Texas Occident. He settled in the once thriving community of Lindisfarne, set to work building a boot shop, and, like many of his comrades from New Hampshire, eventually sent for his family, as well as for his boot-making tools. He had traveled light on his trip westward in search of a new home. Unfortunately, the immigrant wagon train bringing Macleoud's family was attacked by Comanches on the Middle Concho River, southwest of San Angelo, and Macleoud's wife, his eight-year-old daughter, Marie, and all his boot

lasts were taken. His wife was never heard of again. One of the lasts—for a pair of women's boots—reappeared later in Galveston, as a result of the infamous Comanche sweep to the Gulf, in 1878; it had been sharpened and attached to a lance that wounded Augustus Kalplish, a Galveston land speculator. Macleoud had etched his name on the last, so it was traced to him in Lindisfarne. Kalplish sued him for damages under the Attenuated Responsibility Act in the well-known "Last Laughs" case, but was awarded only one dollar, and the last was returned to

foreman of the Kalplish Ranch and one of a handful of men who had been in the Texas Occident long before even the pioneers like Macleoud had arrived—had, in fact, "been here forever, I reckon."

Cervantes continued, "We all hated Macleoud's boots. The heel would wobble out from under you without warning, and at the worst times. Your toes always hurt. The boot always fit too tight, and your feet would sweat and then smell like—well, like they'd been in a cowboy boot all day."

Unreasonable though the first generation of Macleoud's boots were, the next generation were worse, thanks to the flamboyant young heir to the vast and ancient Shumacher Ranch, Arturo Shumacher II. By 1886 Arturo II was already one of the most popular figures in the Occident. Notwithstanding his strangely shaped feet, which, a contemporary wrote, "were as slender and sharp as yucca blades," he had won everyone's admiration with his gracious manners, his quick wit, and his uncanny ability to find hackberries.

It was this talent that, indirectly, led to his central role in one of the indelible legends of the Occident.

On August 23, 1886, Arturo II was picking hackberries near Horseshoe Springs when he espied Angus Macleoud's daughter, Marie, in a Comanche encampment. Emptying the hackberries from his boots into a hollow tree, he concealed himself in the thick willows along the creek and awaited his chance to rescue her. That opportunity came when, as most of the camp slept in the heat of the afternoon, Marie approached the creek near where Arturo II was hidden. She glanced around carefully and then removed her large and elaborate earmuffs, which she had been wearing since leaving New Hampshire many years before.



Macleoud, who immediately put it to use again.

Since many pioneers had lived in the Lindisfarne area for several decades without new footwear, demand for Macleoud's boots was intense. Using the sharpened last for women's boots, Macleoud produced boots for men and women alike as fast as he could make them, despite their uncomfortable, unstable, and impractical high heels. By the time other boot makers arrived in the Texas Occident, the tradition was established, and they were forced to throw away the lasts designed for more reasonable and wholesome low-heeled footwear and to follow the regional fashion.

"It was a love-hate relationship," Miguel Cervantes recalled many years later. Cervantes was the philosopher-

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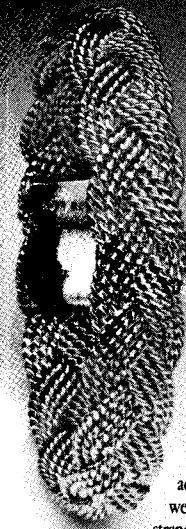
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Arturo II was stunned.

"She was wildly beautiful," he wrote many years later, in Volume II of his autobiography. "For many minutes I could only gaze as she washed her thick, lustrous black hair. Then I remembered that the short time I had in which to save her was rapidly running out. I burst from my concealment, raced across the shallow creek, threw her over my shoulder, and began that long, desperate race across the desert toward Lindisfarne."

Actually, as Marie was to note in Volume III of *her* autobiography, which was written after Arturo II's death, the creek was not as shallow as her rescuer had thought, and he had to empty his boots of several gallons of water before he could even move, much less throw Marie over his shoulder. By the time he had poured the water out, she had recovered somewhat from her surprise at having a young, flamboyant stranger speaking a language she barely remembered burst from the willows wearing such outlandish footwear.

"He threw me over his shoulder and began running," Marie wrote, "but I recalled that I had left behind some ornaments for my earmuffs that I especially treasured. So I made him go by my tepee for them. Then he set out again, but I had another thought and made him go back to the tepee once more for a large, soggy, rather messy parcel that I also coveted."

By then, of course, the whole encampment had been alerted, and as Arturo II set out at a dead run in a southwest direction across the desert, with Marie thrown over his shoulder, all the Comanches in the camp came howling after them. After two or three miles they began to catch up, partly, Marie wrote, "because Arturo II was carrying me, but more because of his strange footwear, which made running nearly impossible."

Taking a bite from the soggy parcel they had returned for, Marie chewed for a moment and then said to Arturo II, "I'm very curious about something, and since the Comanches are about to catch us, and kill you, perhaps you should tell me now. Where are you taking me?"

"Why, to your father, Angus Macleoud, in Lindisfarne," Arturo II said.

"Oh," Marie jumped lightly down from her uncomfortable position over

his shoulder. "Why didn't you tell me before? I can run much faster than you, and we can easily outdistance our pursuers if you'll take off those ridiculous boots."

Arturo II glanced at his boots and pondered for a moment as arrows began to whiz all around them. Then he shook his head. "I couldn't do that. Tradition, you know."

"So," Marie concluded, "I grabbed him, threw him over *my* shoulder, and commenced running across those trackless wastes again. The Comanches soon lost heart then, for they knew I had the bear's strength and the hummingbird's speed, and they could never catch me."

Thus Marie was reunited with her father.

Now sixteen years old and, in addition to being wildly beautiful, addicted to raw buffalo liver, which was what the parcel they had returned for contained, Marie was married in October to Arturo II in the most elaborate wedding ever seen in the Occident. Macleoud, who was immeasurably grateful to Arturo, went into seclusion in his workshop a month before the wedding and crafted the young man a pair of boots especially designed for his dainty, spear-shaped feet.

At the wedding hundreds of impressionable young men—all of whom, if the truth be known, were secretly and hopelessly in love with Marie—watched Arturo II and Marie swirling gracefully in the center of the ballroom floor at the Shumacher Ranch. Long before the wedding week was over and Arturo II and his bride had departed to retrieve his cache of hackberries, Macleoud had more orders for the thin, impossibly pointed boots than he could ever hope to fill in his lifetime.

Many young men performed radical operations on their feet by their own hand, cutting off all or parts of several toes to achieve the desired foot configuration, and the practice has continued in some remote areas of the Texas Occident to this day, although most parents prefer to forestall such grim measures by binding their infant sons' feet.

It has never been determined why some people began to call the Macleoud boot a "cowboy" boot in the early 1920s; conservative Texas Occidentals still refer to it by its traditional name, the fruit boot. □



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Why the European “Freedom of Services” is business here

IF TWELVE NATIONS OF EUROPE CAN
FUNCTION AS ONE BY 1992, WHY CAN'T 50
STATES DO THE SAME?

There's something funny going on,
although no one's laughing.

As the countries of the European
Economic Community behave more
like a single market in 1992 and beyond,
the 50 states here at home behave
sometimes more like medieval fiefdoms.

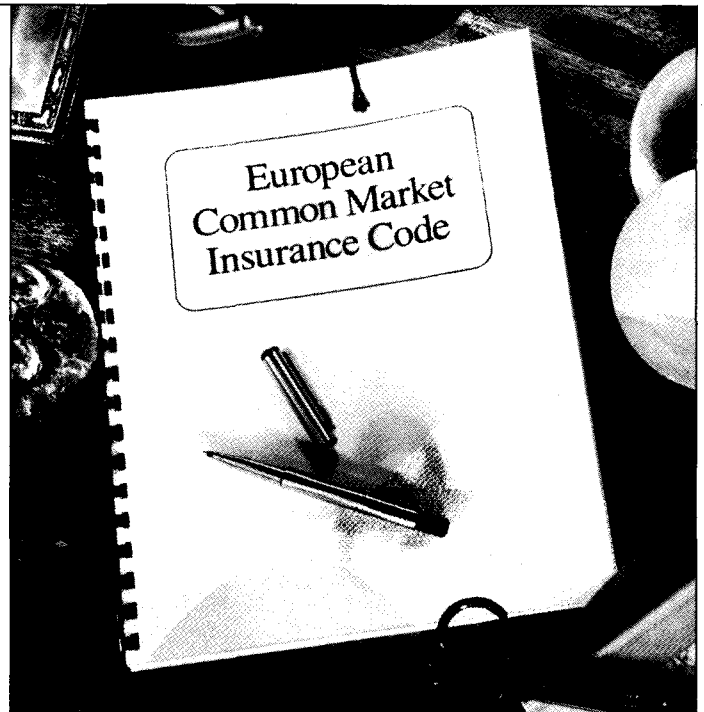
At AIG, we think it's time to talk about
the problem, at least. And see what might be
done to solve it. Now, before 1992 gets here.

FREEDOM OF SERVICES BENEFITS THE CONSUMER.

At the heart of the transformation of
the European Common Market is
something called “freedom of services.”

This means companies established to
do business under one Common Market
country will be able to do business
in any other member country—a concept
known as “mutual recognition”—
without having to be established there.

The result is a more dynamic, compet-
itive and efficient marketplace with less
bureaucracy. And better products and



*Twelve different European countries will
eventually have one set of standards.*

services at lower cost to consumers.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE RANCH...

We don't have freedom of services here
at home. For example, each state, from
Maine to California, is still imposing
regulations piecemeal on the insurance
industry, which is increasingly national
and international in scope.

an principle of important to American e at home.

Today, before an insurer can deliver an insurance policy to a client who does business, say, in 40 states, it takes a small truck to distribute all the paperwork brought about by regulatory redundancy among the various states.

Which adds to the cost of doing business. And to the price consumers ultimately pay for goods and services.

THERE'S GOT TO BE A BETTER WAY.

What's needed, it seems to us, is something along the lines of what's transpiring in Europe.

It is clearly in the consumers' interest to continue regulation of auto and home-owners insurance on a state-by-state basis.

For commercial and industrial insurance, however, where coverages often apply to risks across the country, why not borrow from the European model and allow insurers to conduct business nationwide according to the laws of their home state?

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Instead of nagging the Japanese to change their society and economy, we should protect our own interests by acting on the new realities of international trade

GETTING ALONG WITH JAPAN

BY JAMES FALLOWS

LET US ASSUME, AS I ARGUED PREVIOUSLY in these pages ("Containing Japan," May, 1989), that Japan's businesses and its government will not restrain the one-sided expansion of Japanese exports, and that normal economic forces, including currency adjustments and consumer demand in Japan, will also fail to balance Japan's trade accounts. Let us assume further that these imbalances are bad for the international trading system and threaten certain national interests of the United States. What, if anything, can America do?

The most important step the United States can take is to stop haranguing and negotiating with Japan, and instead act politely but firmly to defend the industries and technologies that are important to us. Through the past generation the American government has nagged too much and done too little in its dealings with Japan. Because Japan's trade surplus stays so large while its consumers and workers continue to live such arduous lives, our representatives tell the Japanese that they should buy more, work less, demand lower prices, take longer vacations, and basically be modern consumer-minded citizens like us. The logical culmination of this process is the "structural impediments" negotiation, now under way in Tokyo, in which the United States is asking Japan to get rid of its cumbersome retail-trade system, its preference for sweetheart deals over open bidding, and other social and political factors that make life difficult for outsiders. When Japan fails to respond, we escalate the level of nagging and complain that Japan is "cheating," while we do very little to strengthen our economy or avoid the dangers that we believe Japan's expansion poses to us.

The all-talk, no-action approach practically begs for Japan's contempt—and has been getting it. This fall American politicians were huffily passing around translat-



ed passages of a controversial book called *The Japan That Can Say 'No'*, which had been published in Japanese earlier in the year. The book, by a prominent politician named Shintaro Ishihara and the famous Akio Morita, of Sony, was full of braggadocio about the superiority of Japanese products and Japanese ways, and was likely to irritate any reader who was not Japanese. But it expressed an emotion that in Japan is hardly confined to hypernationalists: the sense that America has been pushing Japan around for too long, and it's time to push back.

We will serve ourselves and the Japanese best in the long run if we suspend this attempt to persuade Japan to change its internal system. Instead, we should decide on the measures that are most important for strengthening our economy and, without blaming or hectoring any other country, put them into effect. These measures fall into three categories, in this order of importance:

Reducing the domestic problems that handicap American business in general, changing the unrealistic attitudes that make it difficult to deal with Japan, and trying to moderate at least Japan's external behavior;

Devising special measures to encourage industries that have unusual problems competing with Japan, or whose survival is unusually important;

Abandoning the negotiating strategy that we have applied to Japan, along with the view of Japan's intentions on which it has been based. We can replace it with a policy that helps us more and aggravates the Japanese less, if we are willing to recognize the way that Japan's rise has changed the rules of international trade.

The first category is familiar and includes such "eat your spinach" items as reducing the federal budget deficit. The second is an evolutionary change from our current policy. The third would of course be a fundamental

change. Remedies from these three categories are logically connected, and each approach will work best if we can pursue all of them at once. Maybe it will be impossible for us to make all these changes. My purpose for the moment is to suggest how we could improve our fortunes relative to Japan if we were determined to do so.

Home Repairs

ACCORDING TO MOST ECONOMIC THEORY, A trade deficit is not in itself a problem for a country. It means that a country has the luxury of consuming more goods than its factories produce, and it is much less significant than other indicators of a nation's wealth. (North Korea has a proportionately smaller trade deficit than America, yet is worse off in every economic way.) But two aspects of a trade deficit can create problems for a country: how large the deficit is, and what kinds of products flowing into and out of the country create the deficit.

The size of America's trade deficit has already become a political problem for America. Maybe "strategic" is a better word, since the deficit does not affect day-by-day domestic politics so much as it slowly changes America's place in the world. Each week for the past few years the United States has been sending about \$2.5 billion more to foreign owners to pay for imports than it has earned from exports. About \$1 billion a week has gone to Japan. Along with the money, of course, has gone a claim on American assets or future American earnings. There is a strong if indirect connection between this shift of assets and a decline in America's ability to support and bankroll values we believe in. When President Bush went to Poland last summer to say that capitalism would produce more wealth than communism, he couldn't offer enough money from the American-style capitalist system to back up his declaration. He had to hope that Japan's capitalists would agree, and would support his commitment with their money.

Fortunately, the size of a country's trade deficit is largely determined by internal forces. If a government's macroeconomic policy supports more consumption than production, as ours has done zealously through the 1980s, the goods to be consumed have to come from overseas. This is why trade-deficit talks usually start with discussions of the federal budget deficit, which has been declining slowly but should go down more. Of all the ways to deal with this tedious problem, the simplest and most effective, as I argued last month in these pages,

would be an increase in the gasoline tax, starting with twenty-five cents a gallon the first year and going up another twenty-five cents each year until it reaches a dollar. A dollar-per-gallon tax would bring in some \$100 billion a year, would be the single quickest and most politically palatable way to reduce the deficit, and unlike most taxes would have generally useful side effects, such as encouraging conservation.

The American savings rate also affects the size of the trade deficit. The easiest way to increase savings would be to change tax incentives—for instance, to put a ceiling on the mortgage-interest payments that could be deducted from federal tax. Simultaneously, we could make the first \$1,000 or \$2,000 of annual interest earnings tax-free and bring back the individual retirement account, as Senator Lloyd Bentsen has suggested. Like the gasoline tax, these steps would be somewhat regressive, because the poorest people don't have any interest income to exempt from tax. Just about any measure to raise the savings rate will have this drawback, since the people with the most money have the most to save; it would be more sensible to find ways to offset the regressive effect than to decide not to encourage savings.

The other problems that spill over to affect American business are familiar, especially the troubled American school system and pressures on companies for shortsighted profit-taking. We'll no doubt be debating these broad "competitiveness" problems for years to come. Here are two specific suggestions:

To improve the schools, we should admit that we've outgrown the era when 15,000 local school boards could sensibly or fairly decide how students should be prepared to compete in the adult world.

Nearly every other developed country sets nationwide standards for academic performance. We could set competence standards in subjects such as math and science, which students would have to meet before they could move on from the sixth, ninth, and twelfth grades. These would not be intelligence tests or weeding-out devices but rather something like driver's-license tests. We should also at least dream about reviving the Head Start program, to give more students a chance by the time they reach high school. While we're at it, we should follow the lead of much of the rest of the world and make at least three years of foreign-language study mandatory for high-school students.

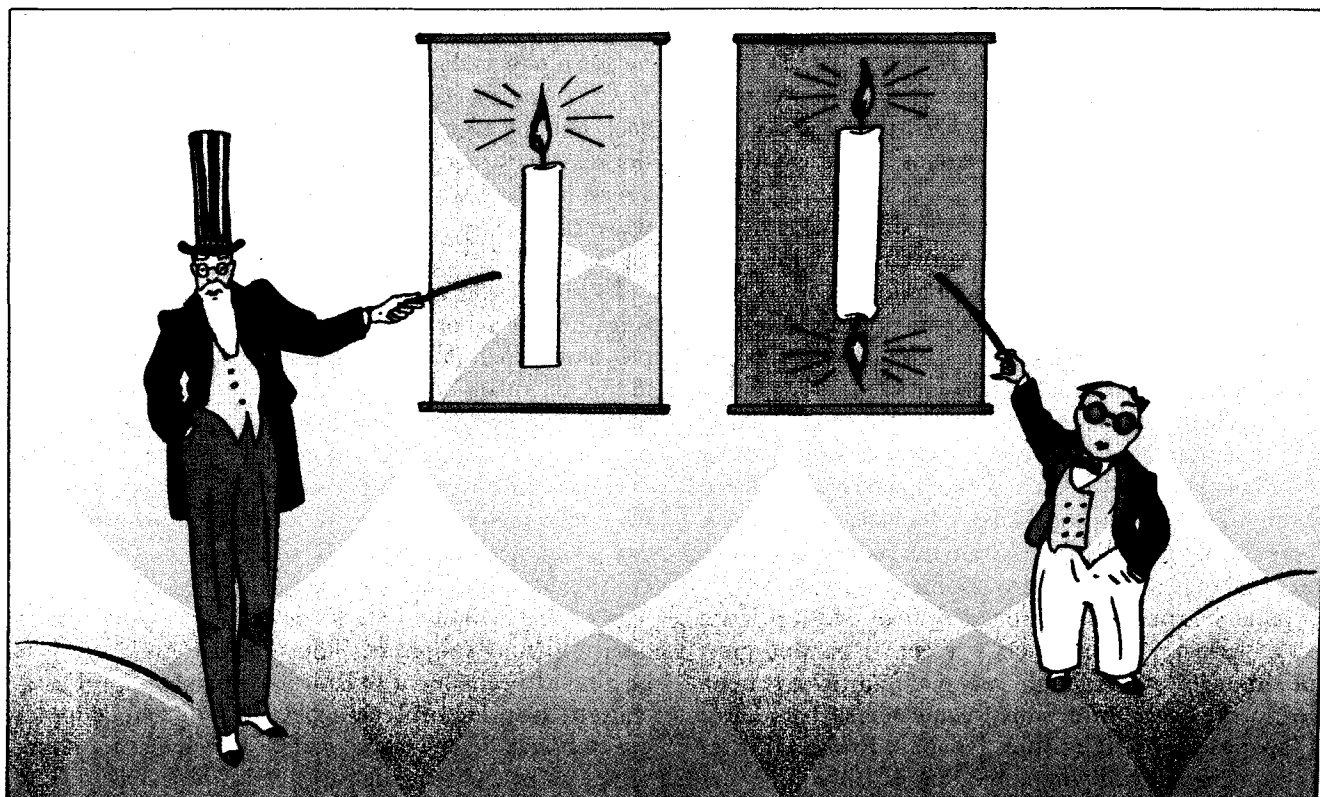
To help change the business culture, we could alter the security and exchange laws so that corporations would have to file detailed profit-and-loss reports once a year, not every three months. No, this would not elimi-

*We tell the
Japanese that they
should buy
more, work less,
demand lower
prices, take longer
vacations, and be
modern consumer-
minded citizens
like us. When Japan
fails to respond,
we escalate the
level of nagging.*

nate the bias toward short-term thinking, and yes, it would make it easier for shady corporations to hide their problems from unsuspecting investors. But such a change would diminish the notorious American obsession with quarterly profit rates and would send a signal about the direction in which we'd like our businesses to head. We could also change the laws governing fiduciary responsibility, so as to encourage pension-fund managers and others in charge of investing large pools of capital to stop insisting on short-term profits and concentrate instead on long-term gain. If it were possible legislatively to reduce the gap between managerial and blue-collar salary scales in American corporations, we should immediately do that, too.

would shrink by 5 percent—at least temporarily—MITI concluded, and America's by only 0.6 percent. (The difference between these figures indicates how much more of Japan's economy is based on sales to America than vice versa.)

The fundamental reason to correct the U.S.-Japanese trade imbalance is so that the larger partnership between the two countries can survive. Americans are accustomed to the idea that they should separate their human feelings for the Russian, Chinese, and Cuban people from their objections to those countries' political systems. Even though our disagreements with the Japanese system are much milder, it is crucial to make the same distinction with Japan. One small but useful step in this direction



Changing Attitudes at, and From, Home

BY STARTING WITH THESE DOMESTIC IMPROVEMENTS, we can avoid working up unhealthy emotions about Japan. Japan is, undoubtedly, America's major trading problem. The U.S. trade deficit with Japan is about 40 percent of America's total trade deficit, and the Japanese surplus with the United States is more than half of Japan's total surplus. Japanese companies sell about as many cars and consumer electronics in America as they do in all other foreign markets combined. In September the prominent newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* published figures, based on a report by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, indicating what a total cessation of U.S.-Japanese trade would mean for the two countries. Japan's economy

would be to discourage use of the term "Japan-bashing," or its Japanese counterpart, "*Nihon tataki*," to describe criticism of Japan's trading policy. I don't know who came up with the term, but its obvious and perhaps intended effect is to make criticism of the Japanese system seem like a roundhouse punch against a culture and a people. The main damage it does is inside Japan, where it aggravates suspicion that the world will be against the people just because they're Japanese. It's not America-bashing when residents of Atsugi, outside Tokyo, complain that fighter planes from the nearby U.S. military base make too much noise. It's not Japan-bashing to point out the problems caused by chronic huge trade surpluses.

A more substantial step would be to look for ways to draw Japan into an international role as something more than an accumulator of surpluses. Changing policies

within Japan is notoriously difficult, because of the domestic lobbies that lock up the political system. Japan's external behavior may be somewhat easier for outsiders to affect.

With so much money pouring into the country, Japan has the leeway to serve as the world's philanthropist for a while, if it chooses to. Therefore, part of our strategy should be to make Japan understand, and live up to, the responsibilities that the rest of the world assumes come with being the richest country on earth.

The nice way to put this point is to say that Japan has a lot to teach the world. Through its postwar example it has shown the rewards of pacifism, self-discipline, and making do with limited resources. To say the same thing slightly less politely, if Japan is not willing to open its markets fully to foreign products (the United States takes more than half of all manufactured exports that the Third World sells; Japan takes less than one tenth), or to open its doors to immigrants and refugees, then it should be made to feel tremendous expectations that it will use its money and skills in a benevolent way.

The main areas in which Japan should be made to feel that it is expected to take the lead are environmental protection, development aid, and debt relief. The countries that Japan views as its colleagues—the North American and Western European industrial democracies in the “Group of Seven”—should press Japan to do more and more on each of these fronts.

At the moment, Japan has a spotty record in these areas. It is notorious in Asia as the financier of clear-cut logging operations in the Malay peninsula and Borneo. There is little pressure from within the country to change practices that affect the environment outside Japan. Yet Japan has proved very sensitive to outside criticism on this subject; for instance, it recently banned most ivory imports, even though ivory had traditionally been used in the *hanko*, or personal-name seals, that almost all Japanese carry. If a future Japanese Prime Minister has panache, he will announce that Japan will henceforth dedicate one percent of its gross national product to finance international research on pollution control. Japan has not had to waste this money on the military, he could say, and thus Japan will use it to help defend all mankind.

Japan is the world's biggest donor of development aid, but three quarters of it goes to Asia rather than to more wretched economies in Africa and Latin America, and a very high share of it has been unofficially tied to purchases from Japanese firms. The rest of the world should press Japan to increase its aid total, to direct more aid to Africa and Latin America, to change most of it to grants, and not simply to “open” contracts to foreign bidders but to require that much of the money be used for purchases from the Third World, North America, and Europe. Similarly, Japan should feel continual pressure to come up with debt-relief plans.

Encouraging Strategic Industries

FOR TWO GENERATIONS JAPAN'S ECONOMIC POLICY has been based on picking out important industries and doing everything possible to help them grow. This is not unfair or predatory. It simply reflects a faith that the government can steer economic development in a direction different from the one that the invisible hand might grope toward. Accordingly, MITI has at various times tried to nurture Japan's textile, steel, machine-tool, computer, and aviation industries, in the belief that these, and the technologies they create, would be future sources of wealth and security for Japan. Japan's government and its consumers have generally accepted the sacrifices this government guidance imposes—mainly, the need to pay more for protected domestic products than they would pay for imported goods.

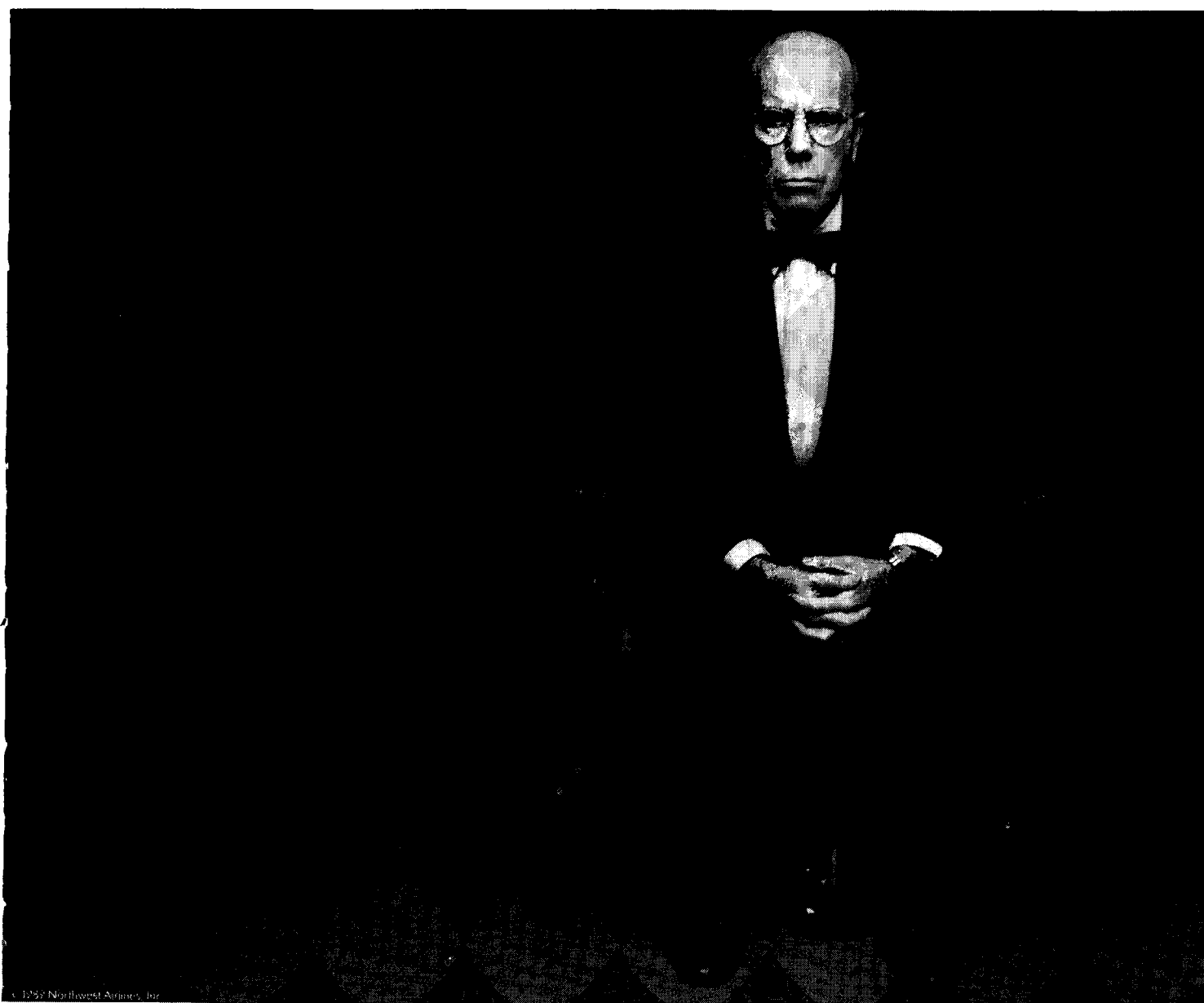
According to classical free-market theory, of course, such steering efforts shouldn't work. They would squander resources that the market itself could allocate more sensibly; they would probably lead the government down blind alleys, since the technological future cannot be foreseen. At best, they would waste society's money.

Even a casual glance at Japan's achievements raises some doubts about the classical view. Its successes have provoked a rich flowering of economic theory, in an attempt to explain how Japan (and other countries, mainly in Asia but including a few in Europe) has made this approach work. The explanation turns on the concept of “natural” advantage. In the old, pure version of Ricardian trade theory, countries were assumed to have inherent advantages in certain businesses—Costa Rica in growing bananas, France in making wine—and the workings of the market would steer demand to the world's most efficient suppliers. The recent theories, whose best-known proponent is Paul Krugman, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, suggest that countries can to a large degree create natural advantages for themselves, as Japan has in high-tech industries. According to this view, countries that try to promote higher-value, higher-tech industries will eventually have more of them than countries that don't.

The strength of high-tech industries takes us back to the second troublesome element of a trade deficit (the first being its absolute size). Malaysia usually enjoys a trade surplus with Japan, but since it is selling palm oil, rubber, petroleum, and some computer chips while importing cars, computers, and other capital goods, its long-term economic prospects are worse. It will have a harder time raising its wages and living standards, and developing new technologies. The natural tendency of Japan's trading system is to put most other nations in Malaysia's position, as sources of raw materials and markets for finished manufactured goods. To avoid being on the receiving end of this practice—that is, to have airplanes and satellites to sell in the future, not just tuna and logs—the

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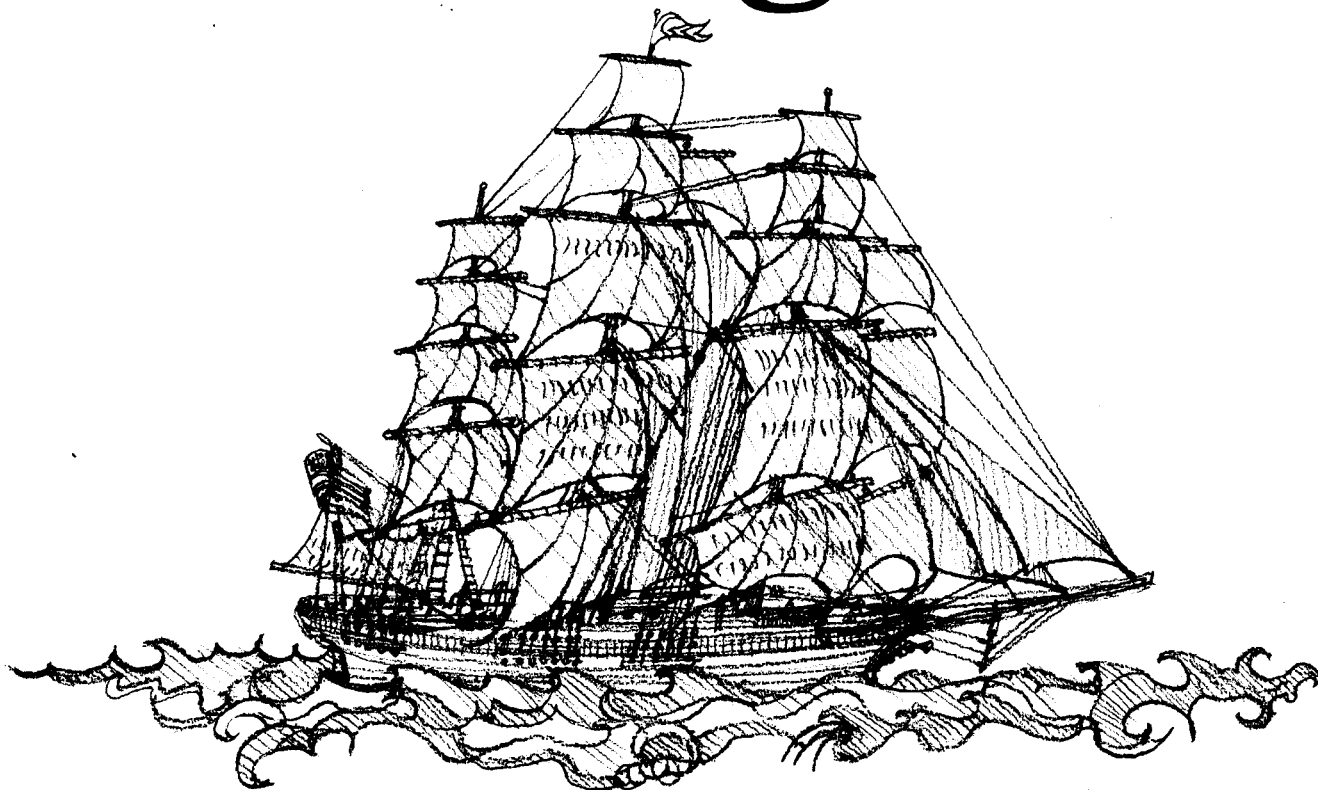


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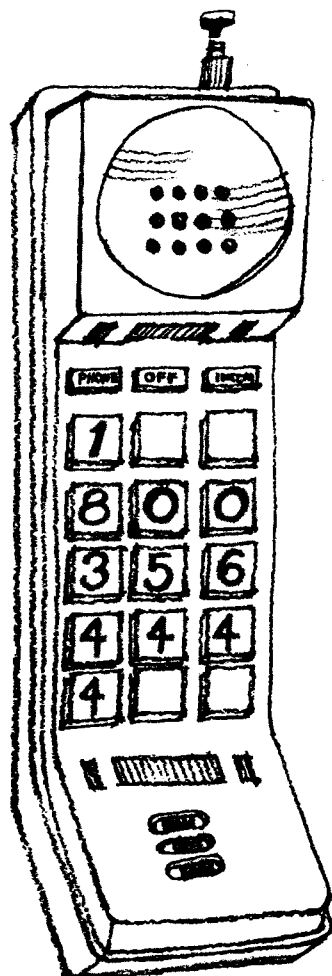
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United States could try to steer a few industries of its own.

America will never be as good at or as enthusiastic about this kind of guidance as Japan is. So many fundamental characteristics of our society, from our racial diversity to our Naderesque suspicion of concentrated power to our ethic of "I gotta be me," work against coordinated economic strategy. Many fundamental characteristics of Japanese society, not least the funneling of talent into the government ministries that guide the economy, make coordination much easier for Japan.

Still, it is not entirely fanciful to think that the United States could improve the environment for high-value industries operating here. No doubt in twenty years there will be new industries that none of us can think of now, but some of today's industries will still be important too. Aviation and space exploration are likely to remain technically and commercially important, so it would be better for American companies to keep a stake in those industries than to give them up. Therefore, we could think about the circumstances that would be most favorable to them—certain tax policies, incentives to ensure a supply of trained engineers—and do what is possible to create a benign environment, within which our businesses can compete. We could think about the industries further down the technical "food chain" that supports aerospace, from electronics and composite materials to machine tools, and try to improve circumstances for them, too. It's hard to imagine a future without an increased demand for computers, or for pharmaceuticals and medical technology, or for telecommunications, or for systems to generate and conserve energy. Even the automobile business, an "old" technology that accounts for around 60 percent of America's trade deficit with Japan, is likely to keep generating profits and spurring technical development for many decades to come.

The main evidence that America can do something to foster industries comes from two of our great success stories, agriculture and aviation. The government decided, at different points, that the industries were crucial, and it decided to help them. The main boost to agriculture came through the land-grant university system and many subsequent decades of government-sponsored agricultural research, and through subsidies for public works. American aircraft companies are strong partly because Defense Department contracts created a natural advantage in technology, production volume, and costs. In principle, the United States could help support, rather than plan, certain industries in a similar way. It would not attempt to lay out industrial plans in detail or to suppress the tremendous openness to change that is one of America's main social and cultural strengths.

In order to take this step, however, we would have to confront topics that many economists have considered taboo, so that we could openly discuss the ways in which government and business might interact. Predictably, our squeamishness about the subject has led to more, and

clumsier, government intervention than we might otherwise have had. America's general approach has been to declare industrial planning an inefficient distortion of the market—but then to lurch in to save mismanaged industries, like the savings and loans, after the damage is done. There is also a taboo on discussions of tariffs or other efforts to regulate trade flows. This leads the government to accept quotas on the imports of cars and textiles, even though quotas do more violence to principles of free trade than tariffs do. (The reason, in brief, is that tariffs simply change the relative prices of products from various nations, while quotas create an artificial scarcity that is economically more inefficient.) There is a taboo on the deliberate supporting of industries by any part of the government except the Pentagon, which leaves some people arguing that the Star Wars program should continue in order to keep America's high-tech businesses strong. In each of these cases, we would have bent our free-trade beliefs less if we had admitted from the beginning that we needed to bend them at least a little.

Detailed suggestions for helping to promote important industries, without trying to make America into a Japanese-style guided economy, vary widely. Within the past year there have been several major works on the subject: *Made in America*, by the MIT Commission on Industrial Productivity; *Meeting World Challenges: U.S. Manufacturing in the 1990s*, by Rudiger Dornbusch (also of MIT, sponsored by the Eastman Kodak corporation); a report by the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations and another by the Twentieth Century Fund; and assorted works by Clyde Prestowitz, Chalmers Johnson, Laura D'Andrea Tyson, Robert Kuttner, John Zysman, Stephen Cohen, Paul Krugman, and many others. The point that runs through all of them is that America can strengthen its economic base, and keep world trade freer than it would otherwise become, if it helps train engineers, relaxes antitrust laws, favors domestic suppliers in certain high-tech fields, and in general tries to improve the climate for its important industries rather than leaving everything except airplanes and agriculture to the invisible hand.

Accepting Japan for What It Is

EXCEPT PERHAPS FOR MIKHAIL GORBACHEV'S SOVIET Union, no country is as closely examined for signs of fundamental change as Japan. America is an extremely fluid society, but discussions of America's problems rarely wind up with statements like "Be patient with our failings, our culture is just about to change." Japan has a much older, more homogeneous, and more durable culture than America does, and yet the working assumption in trade negotiations is that important parts of this culture are about to transform themselves.

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is the central intellectual flaw in our trading policy. If the Japanese do decide to change, for their own reasons, fine. But we should stop wasting time by begging them to do something they are plainly so reluctant to do.

People who talk about change usually mean, in particular, that Japanese consumers will start protesting artificially high prices and that Japanese workers will rebel against demands that they sacrifice themselves for the firm. Change means that the young generation of Japanese will be more relaxed and less disciplined than their parents or grandparents, that women will insist on a place in society more comparable to men's, that urban voters will demand a fair say in the country's policies (right now they're completely outweighed by farm votes, because of a gerrymandered voting-district system), and in general that power will shift away from strong bureaucracies and big corporations and toward the individual citizens of Japan. Change also means blurring the now sharp distinction between *ware-ware Nihonjin*—"we Japanese"—and the rest of the world.

It is certainly conceivable that any or all of these changes could occur, although they would amount to a social revolution in Japan. But it is foolish for America to adopt a policy that will fail *unless* they occur—which is what all our market-opening strategies boil down to. Through the century and a half in which America has been dealing with Japan, "fundamental change" has always been right around the corner, but change has come only when the country has faced dire emergencies: the need to catch up with the industrialized West in the Meiji era, the devastation at the end of the Second World War. Now, with the rest of the world trying to catch up with Japan, it's not so obvious why its people should be eager to tamper with their social formula. Japanese spokesmen have been saying for years that the measures necessary to make Japan a truly open society—exposing rice farmers and small merchants to international competition, accepting immigrants, breaking up big cartel-like industrial combines—are too traumatic to ask of Japan. Maybe it's time to concede the point.

The United States should participate in the debate about Japan's future in a consistent but not arrogant way. When asked, we should say that according to our values, any country will be better off with freer markets and broader individual liberties. But we should not nag Japan endlessly on these subjects, and we should not act as if our overall collaboration with the Japanese, in the many areas where our interests are similar, depends on their becoming more and more like us. We should base our plans

on the assumption that Japan's internal order is not going to change. If it surprises us later on, we can always make new plans.

In the meantime, our plans should reflect what we've learned about the Japanese system. For one thing, they should focus on results, not rules. American society is based on certain principles of interaction. Everyone, in theory, has an equal chance to make a million dollars or be elected President or become a movie star. Our basic assumption is that if the rules of competition are fair, the result—whatever it is—must be acceptable. Most aspects of Japanese life start from the opposite premise. In politics, in business, even in the arranged marriages that are still typical in Japan, the result itself is usually more important than the rules that led to it.

America's interest in process, and Japan's in result, have an important bearing on trade problems. They explain why the U.S. negotiating strategy has generally failed. Each year the Americans show up with a new list of complaints. Long ago there were textile talks, and through the 1980s there have been negotiations over beef, citrus, semiconductors, airport-construction and MOSS ("market-oriented sector-selective") measures, and now "structural impediments." The Americans have generally asked for changes in rules, to make the competition "fair." These the Japanese have generally granted, knowing that the impact would probably be quite small. The most powerful chart in Clyde Prestowitz's book *Trading Places* shows the share of the Japanese semiconductor market held by U. S. companies from the early 1970s to 1986. During that period almost every part of the "process" changed. The yen rose and fell against the dollar. American companies set up sales offices in Tokyo. Prime Min-

isters promised to open the market. Sanctions and action plans were announced. At the beginning of the period the American makers held nine percent of the market. At the end of the period they held nine percent.

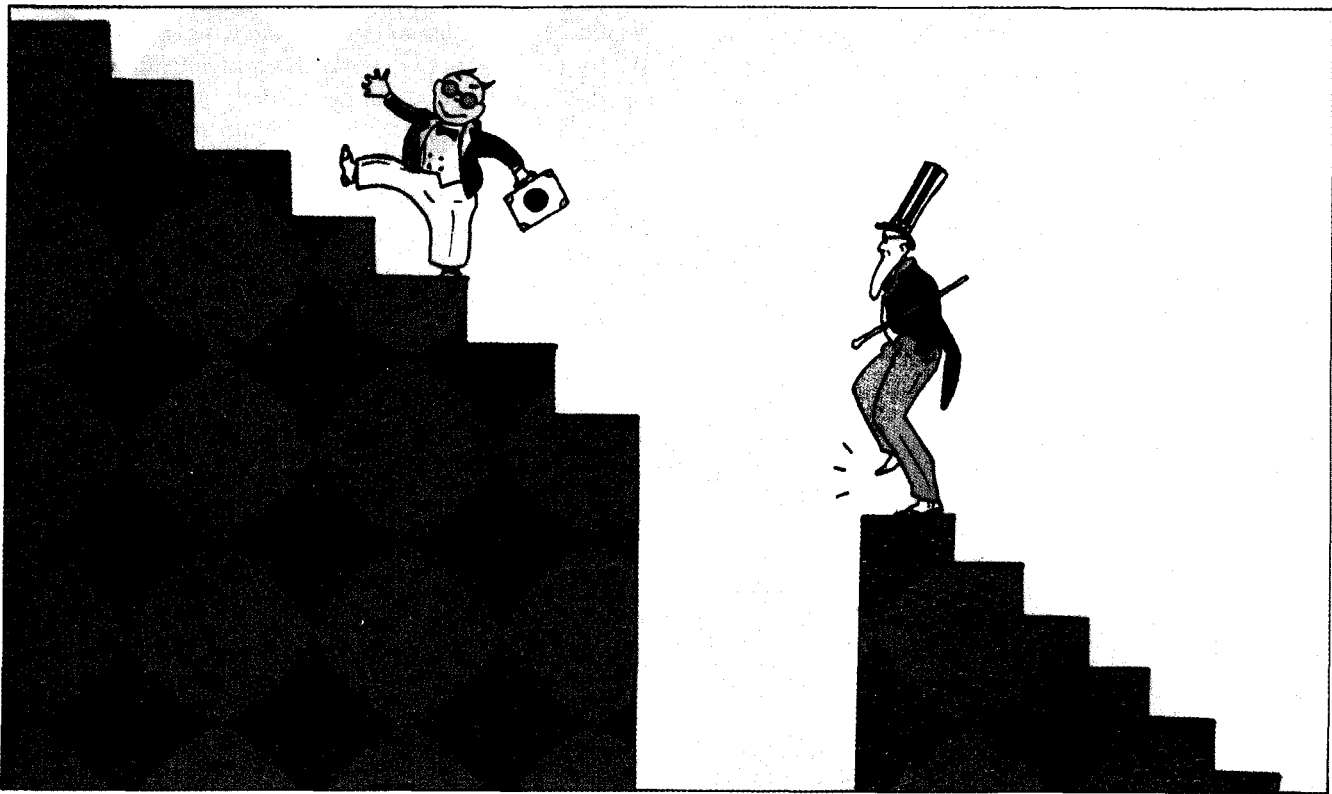
If we stop worrying so much about process and focus coolly on results, we can dismiss two theoretically promising but actually ineffective solutions to the trade imbalance: "talking down the dollar," and creating a free-trade zone with Japan, like the new one with Canada. Three years of a sinking dollar and this year's slight recovery have been worse than useless in correcting our trade imbalance with Japan. Although the lower dollar dramatically reduced America's trade deficit with Europe, it had much less impact on trade with Japan. The net effect of talking down the dollar has been to double the value of Japan's international assets, in a world where most calcu-

*Changing policies
within Japan is
notoriously
difficult, because
of the domestic
lobbies that
lock up the poli-
tical system.
Japan's external
behavior may be
somewhat easier for
outsiders to
affect.*

lations are still made in dollars, and to cut in half the price of American assets for buyers with yen. (In theory, it should have cut in half the price of American exports, too, but the Japanese retail system has passed on very little of this saving to the Japanese consumer.) We can easily assume that similarly disappointing results would be achieved from the procedure of creating a U.S.-Japan free-trade zone. If it were the kind of zone that Japanese negotiators have in mind, based simply on reducing tariffs and legal barriers, it would make the trade imbalance worse, since formal barriers are the only way America restricts imports. If it were the kind that American economists have in mind, based on truly open markets in each country, it would be unacceptable to Japan.

take retaliatory steps later on, such as imposing tariffs.

The strengths and weaknesses of this approach are like those of the Gramm-Rudman bill. It would set a clear target, which the Japanese would appreciate, but it would not be automatically self-enforcing. Japanese officials might not take it seriously, because they have heard "this time I really mean it" speeches from American negotiators many, many times before. Transferring the burden of controlling the surplus to Japan would relieve America of the necessity of making constant, niggling complaints. It would, however, give the whole Japanese economy the power that Japanese automobile manufacturers now enjoy. Under the voluntary export-restriction system, Japanese manufacturers themselves limit the supply of cars



WHAT, THEN, DOES THAT LEAVE AS A SOLUTION to trade imbalances? Several results-oriented approaches have emerged from academic and political debate, and the real answer would probably be a combination of them.

- The tête-à-tête solution. Cyrus Vance and Henry Kissinger are the most famous advocates of solving trade problems through a form of Great Power summitry. The American and Japanese governments would agree on just how large a trade imbalance they could tolerate—for instance, \$20 billion a year rather than the current \$50 billion. The U.S. government would work on improving industries in the United States, but it would leave reform of the Japanese economy to the Japanese. If the Japanese government could not turn off the export spigot or draw in more imports, presumably the United States would

they send to the United States. They've used this power to shift supply away from cheap cars and to the up-market models, making U.S. sales more lucrative than ever before.

- The "managed trade" approach. This term has become anathema, because it suggests a bureaucratic nightmare in which governments would try to set prices and market shares for every product in every part of the world. This kind of interference would gum up the market and make us yearn for the good old days of huge trade deficits. But there are a number of suggestions for less-intrusive management regimes. Clyde Prestowitz uses the metaphor of the international airlines system: companies compete fiercely, but governments agree about how many competitors will be able to enter each market. ("The airlines can't be sure whether they'll get thirty-

five percent of the market or fifty-five,” Prestowitz says. “But they know they won’t get *zero*.”) Most international trade operates under some kind of government restriction—quotas, tariffs, requirements that manufactured goods contain locally made components. It would be more sensible to shift to this kind of managed competition, Prestowitz and others argue.

- The *busshu shokku*. During his administration Richard Nixon inflicted several cases of *nikuson shokku* on the Japanese, including his surprise announcement, in 1971, that the United States would go off the gold standard. This led to a drop in the dollar and affected Japan’s export plans. The *nikuson shokku* included a temporary surcharge on imports, as a way of correcting the trade imbalance. Several academics and government officials I have spoken with have privately endorsed a plan that very few people have yet recommended publicly: a *busshu shokku*, with unilateral imposition of a 20 or 25 percent across-the-board tariff on imports from Japan. Rudiger Dornbusch, of MIT, has recently recommended a tariff tied to objective measures of Japanese economic performance. The United States should announce a goal of increasing its manufactured exports to Japan by 15 percent a year, Dornbusch says. In any year when the goal is not met, the United States would automatically impose a tariff on Japanese-made products.

The drawbacks of a tariff are many and obvious. It would impose a heavy cost on American consumers. It would jack up the price of many “American” products, since so many crucial components come from Japan. It might simply shift trade to Japanese-owned plants in Korea or Malaysia and defeat its purpose. It might tempt American businesses to profiteer and raise their prices, rather than selling more. It would violate General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade rules of international trade, and it might well infuriate the Japanese. (Then again, it might not. One academic who has specialized in studies of the *nikuson shokku* said that a new shock could actually seem comforting to Japan. American negotiators could immediately fly to Tokyo and explain how sorry they were that they’d had to take this step, in order to remain strong enough to be a worthy partner to Japan. Japan would finally know where America stood.)

But there are also some advantages to handling problems in this clear, primitive way. Tariffs always make better economic sense than quotas or voluntary export restraints. The revenue from tariffs goes to the U.S. government; the monopoly profits from quotas go to foreign manufacturers. A simple declaration of an across-the-board tariff would get Japan’s attention, and its very simplicity would spare the government thousands of detailed decisions about which products should or should not be taxed. No one is eager to see this kind of surprise tariff, but if the United States were forced into it, it might put U.S.-Japanese relations on a more even keel.

- Other blunt instruments. The United States could

impose a strict-reciprocity rationale whenever Japanese markets are blatantly closed. American aircraft manufacturers have for years understood that they have to make their products under license in Japanese factories if they hope to sell to the Japanese military (this is the point of the FSX controversy). The same rule could be applied in reverse: the Pentagon could say that starting two years from now, any Japanese components it buys must be licensed for production in the United States. A number of people, the best known of whom is the financier Warren Buffett, have recommended that America adopt an “import certificate” scheme. For each thousand dollars’ worth of products a company exported from America, it would receive certificates allowing a thousand dollars’ worth of imports to be brought back in. The certificates would be traded on an open market; the exporting company could sell them to any other company, foreign or domestic, that wanted to import. The price the certificates commanded—in effect, the premium added to the price of all imports—would vary with the certificates’ scarcity. As U.S. exports increased, the certificates would become more numerous and less valuable. This in turn would mean that the *de facto* tariff on imports would go down. As the trade balance improved the *de facto* tariff would eliminate itself.

Why should we take these steps? The grandiose answer would involve America’s ability to sustain its industrial development, or to pay for the values it wants to advance—better schools at home, more democracy overseas. But it may be appropriate to concentrate on a narrower goal—that of preserving our relations with Japan.

America and Japan have a large number of bonds and common interests. Thousands and thousands of people in each country have friends in the other. Universities and scientists have exchanges and ties. The arts and culture of each country, highbrow and popular, can enrich the other. And of course there are all the familiar and important diplomatic, military, business, and financial links. In reality, these shared interests do not depend on the assumption that the two countries have similar economic systems or that their trade problems will naturally work themselves out through free trade. But our trade negotiations, with their constant demands that Japan open markets and change, imply that the two countries can’t be friends unless their systems converge.

The United States and Mexico, for different reasons, need to maintain decent relations with each other, but the relations don’t depend on the assumption that the flow of people north and south across the border will “naturally” balance itself out. The two countries attempt to regulate the flow, with immigration laws and border patrols, so that it won’t entirely disrupt their relations. Regulating the economic flow between countries may violate the ideology of American-style economics, but it is the only way to preserve harmony between the United States and Japan. □

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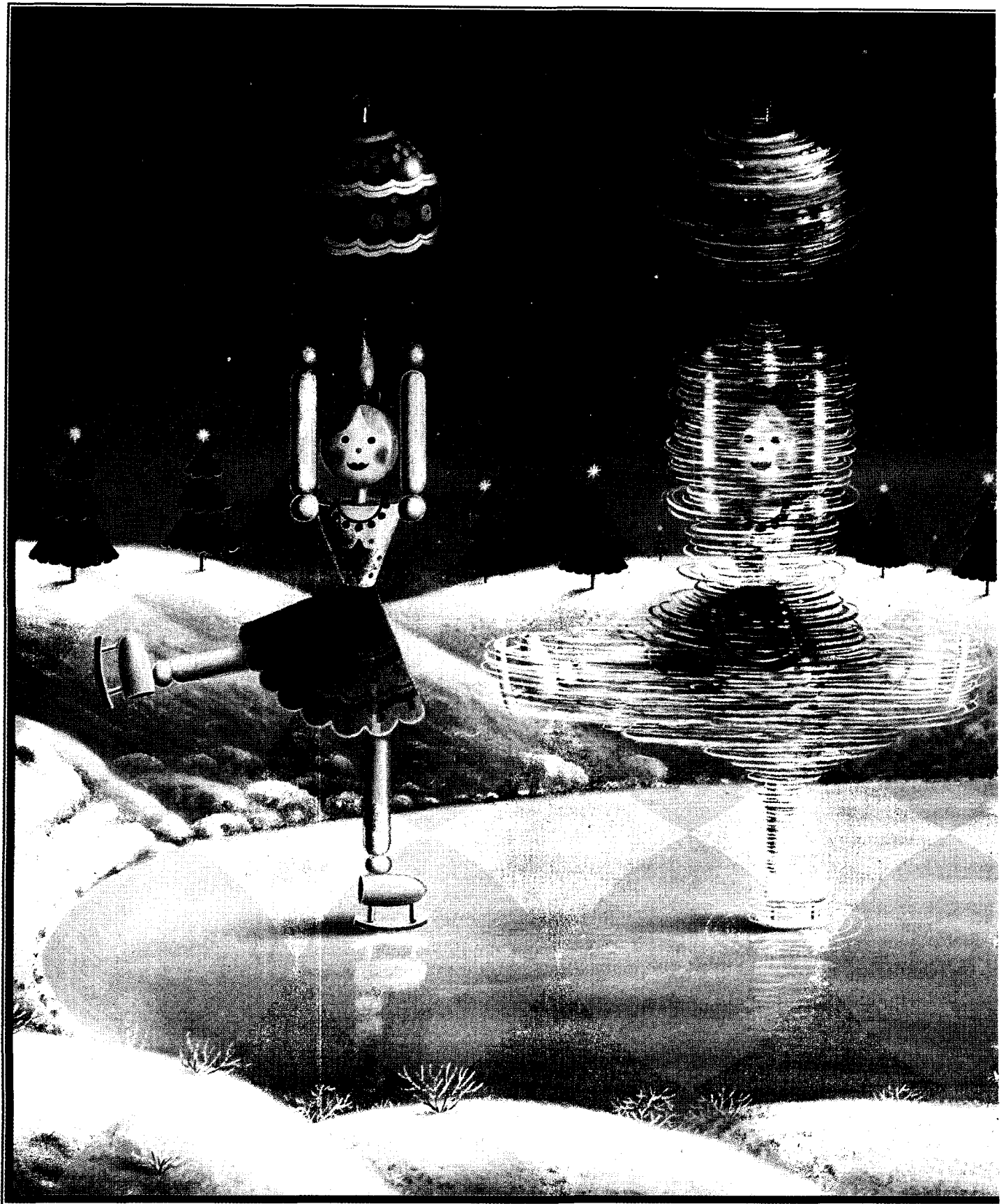
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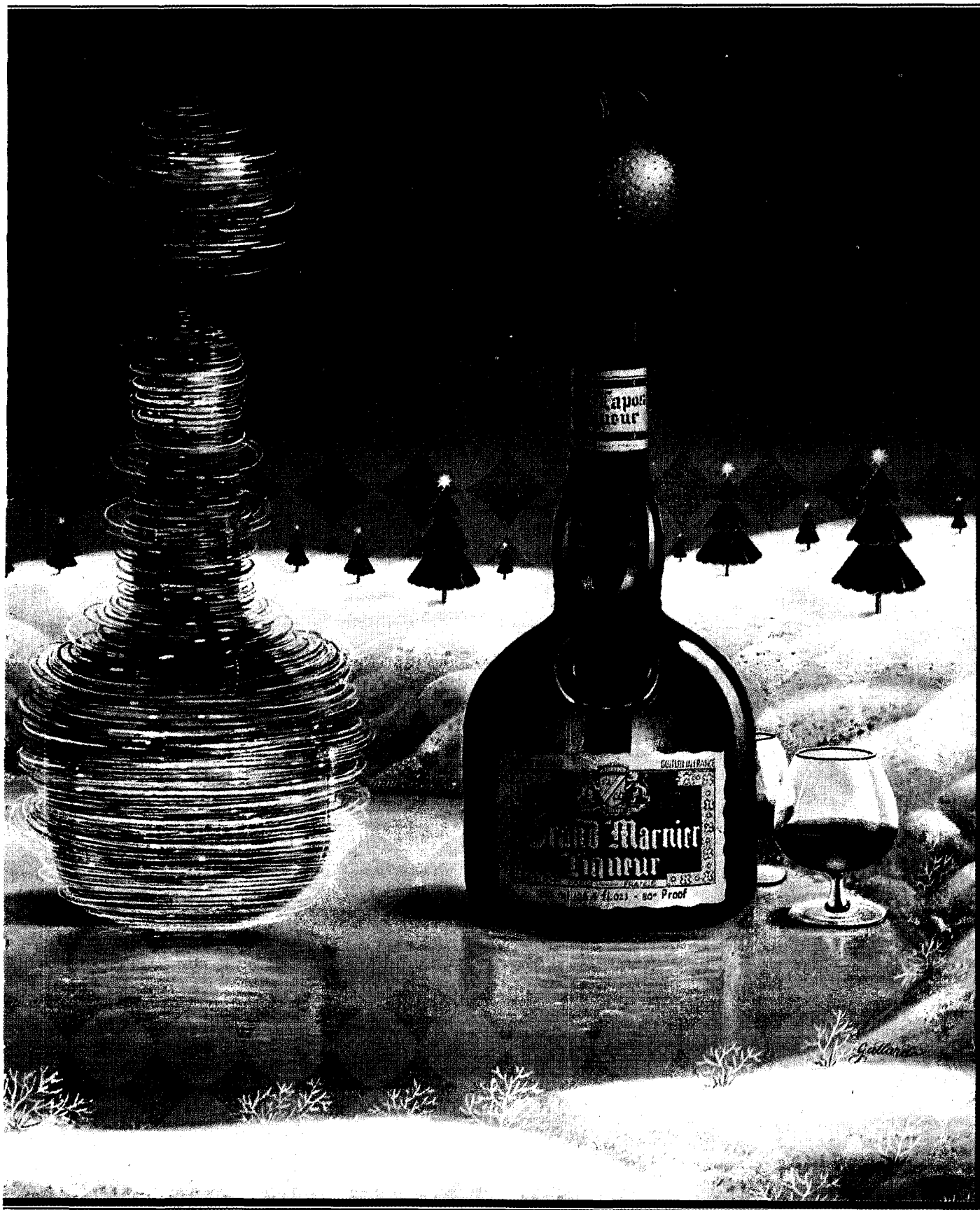


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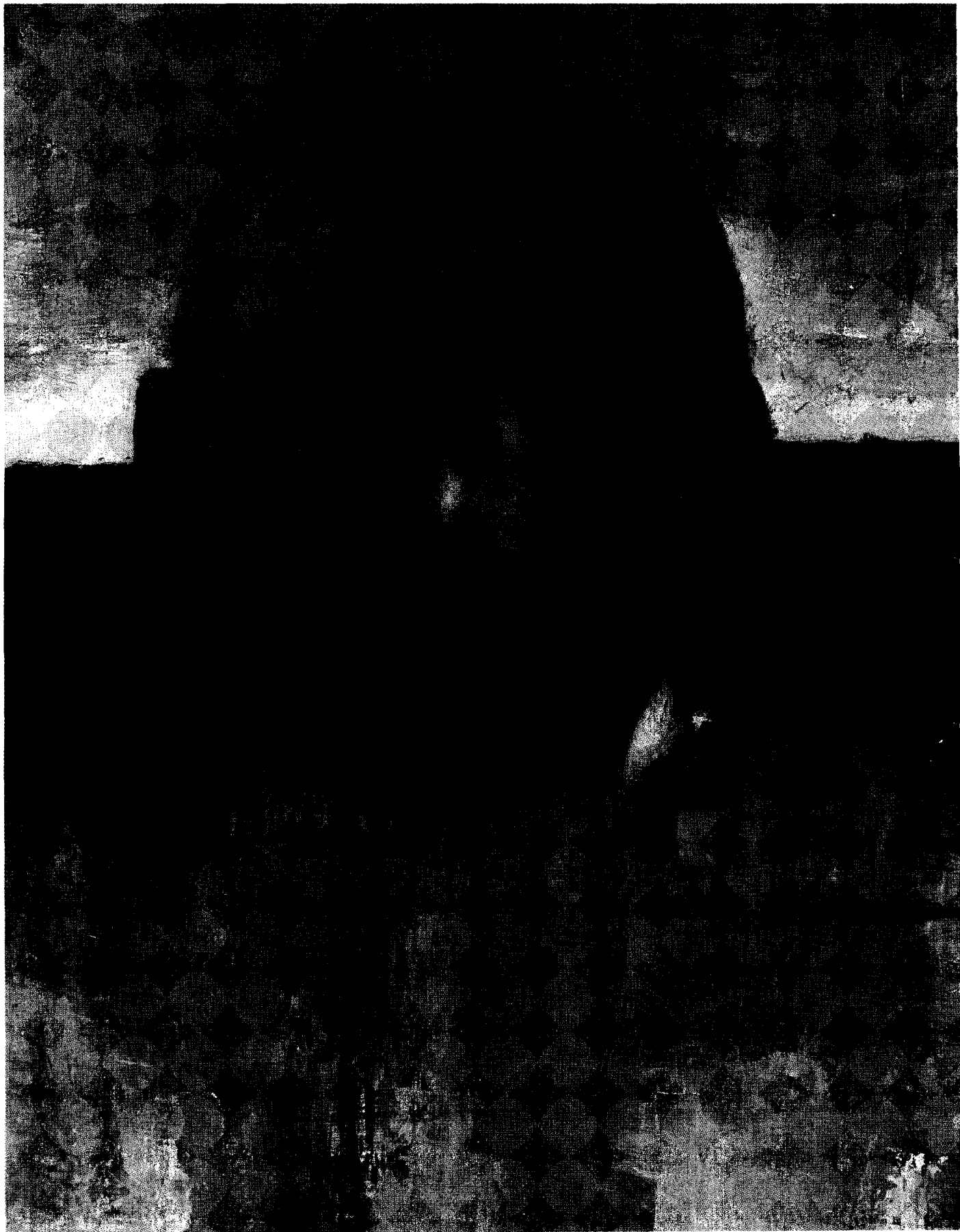
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*On the political
meaning of Christianity*

CAN WE BE GOOD WITHOUT GOD?

BY GLENN TINDER

WE ARE SO USED TO THINKING OF SPIRITUALITY as withdrawal from the world and human affairs that it is hard to think of it as political. Spirituality is personal and private, we assume, while politics is public. But such a dichotomy drastically diminishes spirituality, construing it as a relationship to God without implications for one's relationship to the surrounding world. The God of Christian faith (I shall focus on Christianity, although the God of the New Testament is also the God of the Old Testament) created the world and is deeply engaged in the affairs of the world. The notion that we can be related to God and not to the world—that we can practice a spirituality that is not political—is in conflict with the Christian understanding of God.

And if spirituality is properly political, the converse also is true, however distant it may be from prevailing assumptions: politics is properly spiritual. The spirituality of politics was affirmed by Plato at the very beginnings of Western political philosophy and was a commonplace of medieval political thought. Only in modern times has it come to be taken for granted that politics is entirely secular. The inevitable result is the demoralization of politics. Politics loses its moral structure and purpose, and turns into an affair of group interest and personal ambition. Government comes to the aid of only the well organized and influential, and it is limited only where it is checked by countervailing forces. Politics ceases to be understood as a pre-eminently human activity and is left to those

who find it profitable, pleasurable, or in some other way useful to themselves. Political action thus comes to be carried out purely for the sake of power and privilege.

It will be my purpose in this essay to try to connect the severed realms of the spiritual and the political. In view of the fervent secularism of many Americans today, some will assume this to be the opening salvo of a fundamentalist attack on "pluralism." Ironically, as I will argue, many of the undoubted virtues of pluralism—respect for the individual and a belief in the essential equality of all human beings, to cite just two—have strong roots in the union of the spiritual and the political achieved in the vision of Christianity. The question that secularists have to answer is whether these values can survive without these particular roots. In short, can we be good without God? Can we affirm the dignity and equality of individual persons—values we ordinarily regard as secular—without giving them transcendental backing? Today these values are honored more in the breach than in the observance; Manhattan Island alone, with its extremes of sybaritic wealth on the one hand and Calcuttan poverty on the other, is testimony to how little equality really counts for in contemporary America. To renew these indispensable values, I shall argue, we must rediscover their primal spiritual grounds.

Many will disagree with my argument, and I cannot pretend there are no respectable reasons for doing so. Some may disagree, however, because of misunderstandings. A few words at the outset may help to prevent this. First, although I dwell on Christianity, I do not mean thus to slight Judaism or its contribution to Western values. It is arguable that every major value affirmed in Christianity originated with the ancient Hebrews. Jewish sensitivities on this matter are understandable. Christians sometimes speak as though unaware of the elemental facts that Jesus was a Jew, that he died before even the earliest parts of the New Testament were written, and that his scriptural matrix was not Paul's Letter to the Romans or the Gospel of John but the Old Testament. Christianity diverged from Judaism in answering one question: Who was Jesus? For Christians, he was the anticipated Messiah, whereas for traditional Jews (Paul and the first Christians were of course also Jews), he was not. This divergence has given Christianity its own distinctive character, even though it remains in a sense a Jewish faith.

The most adamant opposition to my argument is likely to come from protagonists of secular reason—a cause represented pre-eminently by the Enlightenment. Locke and Jefferson, it will be asserted, not Jesus and Paul, created our moral universe. Here I cannot be as disarming as I hope I was in the paragraph above, for underlying my argument is the conviction that Enlightenment rationalism is not nearly so constructive as is often supposed. Granted, it has sometimes played a constructive role. It

has translated certain Christian values into secular terms and, in an age becoming increasingly secular, has given them political force. It is doubtful, however, that it could have created those values or that it can provide them with adequate metaphysical foundations. Hence if Christianity declines and dies in coming decades, our moral universe and also the relatively humane political universe that it supports will be in peril. But I recognize that if secular rationalism is far more dependent on Christianity than its protagonists realize, the converse also is in some sense true. The Enlightenment carried into action political ideals that Christians, in contravention of their own basic faith, often shamefully neglected or denied. Further, when I acknowledged that there are respectable grounds for disagreeing with my argument, I had secular rationalism particularly in mind. The foundations of political decency are an issue I wish to raise, not settle.

Christian Love

LOVE SEEMS AS DISTANT AS SPIRITUALITY FROM politics, yet any discussion of the political meaning of Christianity must begin by considering (or at least making assumptions about) love. Love is for Christians the highest standard of human relationships, and therefore governs those relationships that make up politics. Not that political relationships are expected to exhibit pure love. But their place in the whole structure of human relationships can be understood only by using the measure that love provides.

The Christian concept of love requires attention not only because it underlies Christian political ideas but also because it is unique. Love as Christians understand it is distinctly different from what most people think of as love. In order to dramatize the Christian faith in an incarnate and crucified God, Paul spoke ironically of "the folly of what we preach," and it may be said that Christian love is as foolish as Christian faith. Marking its uniqueness, Christian love has a distinctive name, *agape*, which sets it apart from other kinds of love, such as *philia*, or friendship, and *eros*, or erotic passion.

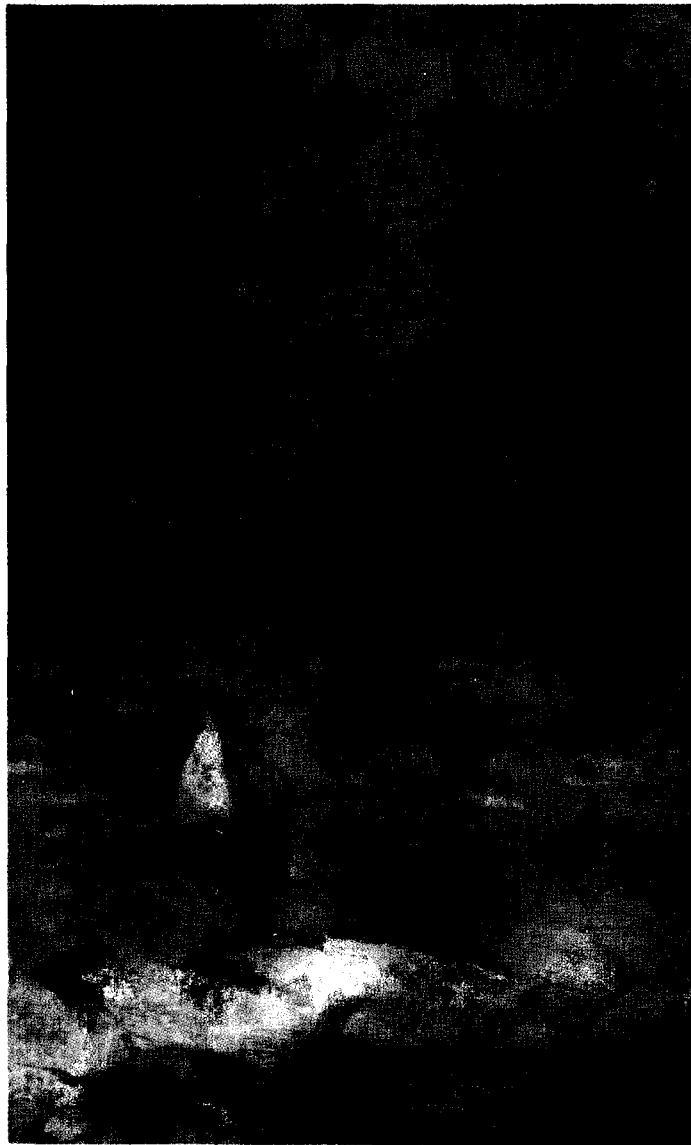
When John wrote that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son," he illuminated the sacrificial character of divine love. This is the mark of *agape*. It is entirely selfless. If one could love others without judging them, asking anything of them, or thinking of one's own needs, one would meet the Christian standard. Obviously, no one can. Many of us can meet the requirements of friendship or erotic love, but *agape* is beyond us all. It is not a love toward which we are naturally inclined or for which we have natural capacities. Yet it is not something exclusively divine, like omnipotence, which human beings would be presumptuous to emulate. In fact, it is demanded of us. *Agape* is the core of Christian morality. Moreover, as we shall see, it is a source of political stan-

dards that are widely accepted and even widely, if imperfectly, realized.

The nature of *agape* stands out sharply against the background of ordinary social existence. The life of every society is a harsh process of mutual appraisal. People are ceaselessly judged and ranked, and they in turn ceaselessly judge and rank others. This is partly a necessity of social and political order; no groups whatever—clubs, corporations, universities, or nations—can survive without allocating responsibilities and powers with a degree of realism. It is partly also a struggle for self-esteem; we judge ourselves for the most part as others judge us. Hence outer and inner pressures alike impel us to enter the struggle.

The process is harsh because all of us are vulnerable. All of us manifest deficiencies of natural endowment—of intelligence, temperament, appearance, and so forth. And all personal lives reveal moral deficiencies as well—blamable failures in the past, and vanity, greed, and other such qualities in the present. The process is harsh also because it is unjust. Not only are those who are judged always imperfect and vulnerable, but the judges are imperfect too. They are always fallible and often cruel. Thus few are rated exactly, or even approximately, as they deserve.

There is no judgment so final nor rank so high that one can finally attain security. Many are ranked high; they are regarded as able, or wise, or courageous. But such appraisals are never unanimous or stable. A few reach summits of power and honor where it seems for a moment that their victory is definitive. It transpires,



THE CONCEPT OF THE EXALTED INDIVIDUAL IMPLIES THAT GOVERNMENTS—INDEED, ALL PERSONS WHO WIELD POWER—MUST TREAT INDIVIDUALS WITH CARE.

however, that they are more fully exposed to judgment than anyone else, and often they have to endure torrents of derision.

Agape means refusing to take part in this process. It lifts the one who is loved above the level of reality on which a human being can be equated with a set of observable characteristics. The *agape* of God, according to Christian faith, does this with redemptive power; God “crucifies” the observable, and always deficient, individual, and “raises up” that individual to new life. The *agape* of human beings bestows new life in turn by accepting the work of God.

The power of *agape* extends in two directions. Not only is the one who is loved exalted but so is the one who loves. To lift someone else above the process of mutual scrutiny is to stand above that process oneself. To act on the faith that every human being is a beneficia-

ry of the honor that only God can bestow is to place oneself in a position to receive that honor. (That is not the aim, of course; if it were, *agape* would be a way of serving oneself and would thus be nullified.) *Agape* raises all those touched by it into the community brought by Christ, the Kingdom of God. Everyone is glorified. No one is judged and no one judges.

Here we come to the major premise (in the logic of faith, if not invariably in the history of Western political philosophy) of all Christian social and political thinking—the concept of the exalted individual. Arising from *agape*, this concept more authoritatively than any other shapes not only Christian perceptions of social reality but also Christian delineations of political goals.

The Exalted Individual

TO GRASP FULLY THE IDEA OF THE EXALTED individual is not easy, but this is not because it rests on a technical or complex theory. The difficulty of grasping the concept is due to its being beyond the whole realm of theory. It refers to something intrinsically mysterious, a reality that one cannot see by having someone else point to it or describe it. It is often spoken of, but the words we use—"the dignity of the individual," "the infinite value of a human being," and so forth—have become banal and no longer evoke the mystery that called them forth. Hence we must try to understand what such phrases mean. In what way, from a Christian standpoint, are individuals exalted? In trying to answer this question, the concept of destiny may provide some help.

In the act of creation God grants a human being glory, or participation in the goodness of all that has been created. The glory of a human being, however, is not like that of a star or a mountain. It is not objectively established but must be freely affirmed by the one to whom it belongs. In this sense the glory of a human being is placed in the future. It is not a mere possibility, however, nor does it seem quite sufficient to say that it is a moral norm. It is a fundamental imperative, even though all of us, in our sinfulness, to some degree refuse it. This fusion of human freedom and divine necessity may be summarized by saying that the glory of an individual, rather than being immediately given, is destined.

Destiny is not the same as fate. The word refers not to anything terrible or even to anything inevitable, in the usual sense of the word, but to the temporal and free unfoldment of a person's essential being. A destiny is a spiritual drama.

A destiny is never completely fulfilled in time, in the Christian vision, but leads onto the plane of eternity. It must be worked out in time, however, and everything that happens to a person in time enters into eternal selfhood and is there given meaning and justification. My destiny is what has often been referred to as my soul.

Realizing a destiny is not a matter of acquiescing in some form of relentless causality. If it were, there would be no sin. A destiny can be failed or refused. That is why it is not a fate. True, the very word "destiny" is indicative of necessity, but the necessity of a destiny is not like the necessity that makes an object fall when it is dropped. Rather, it is the kind I recognize when I face a duty I am tempted to evade and say to myself, "This I *must* do." Yet my destiny has a weight unlike that of any particular duty, since it is the life given to me by God. As is recognized in words like "salvation" and "damnation," the call of destiny has a peculiar finality.

The *agape* of God consists in the bestowal of a destiny, and that of human beings in its recognition through faith. Since a destiny is not a matter of empirical observation, a

person with a destiny is, so to speak, invisible. But every person has a destiny. Hence the process of mutual scrutiny is in vain, and even the most objective judgments of other people are fundamentally false. *Agape* arises from a realization of this and is therefore expressed in a refusal to judge.

The Lord of all time and existence has taken a personal interest in every human being, an interest that is compassionate and unwearying. The Christian universe is peopled exclusively with royalty. What does this mean for society?

TO SPEAK CAUTIOUSLY, THE CONCEPT OF THE EXALTED individual implies that governments—indeed, all persons who wield power—must treat individuals with care. This can mean various things—for example, that individuals are to be fed and sheltered when they are destitute, listened to when they speak, or merely left alone so long as they do not break the law and fairly tried if they do. But however variously care may be defined, it always means that human beings are not to be treated like the things we use and discard or just leave lying about. They deserve attention. This spare standard has of course been frequently and grossly violated by people who call themselves Christians. It has not been without force, however. Even in our own secularized times people who are useless or burdensome, hopelessly ill or guilty of terrible crimes, are sometimes treated with extraordinary consideration and patience.

The modest standard of care implies other, more demanding standards. Equality is one of these; *no one* is to be casually sacrificed. No natural, social, or even moral differences justify exceptions to this rule. Of course destinies make people not equal but, rather, incomparable; equality is a measurement and dignity is immeasurable. But according to Christian claims, every person has been immeasurably dignified. Faith discerns no grounds for making distinctions, and the distinctions made by custom and ambition are precarious before God. "Many that are first will be last, and the last first." Not only love but humility as well—the humility of not anticipating the judgments of God—impels us toward the standard of equality.

No one, then, belongs at the bottom, enslaved, irremediably poor, consigned to silence; this is equality. This points to another standard: that no one should be left outside, an alien and a barbarian. *Agape* implies universality. Greeks and Hebrews in ancient times were often candidly contemptuous of most of the human race. Even Jesus, although not contemptuous of Gentiles, conceived of his mission as primarily to Israel. However, Jesus no doubt saw the saving of Israel as the saving of all humankind, and his implicit universalism became explicit, and decisive for the history of the world, in the writings and missionary activity of Paul. Christian universalism (as



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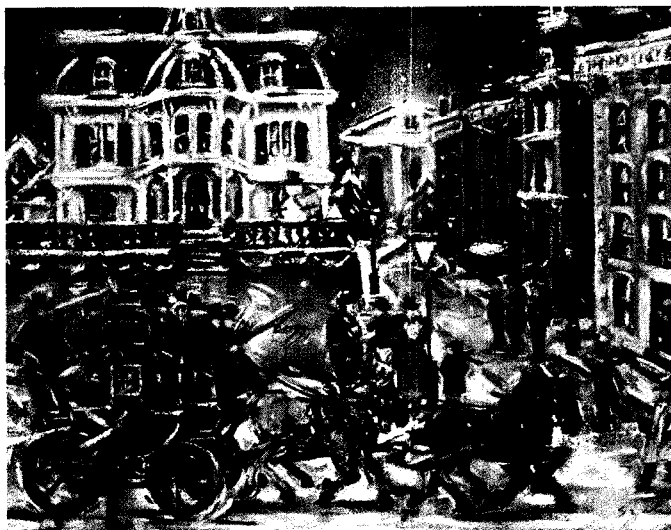
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all events: Christmas in Newport, Box 716, Newport, RI; (401) 849-6454.

**CHRISTMAS IN COLONIAL
WILLIAMSBURG**
Williamsburg, Va.
December 1 • January 1

On December 1, staff and residents deck the halls with all-natural ingredients: 3,500 yards of white pine roping, some 500 wreaths and swags, fresh lemons, apples, sage oranges, pomegranates, and even dried vegetables from their gardens. The season officially opens with the Grand Illumination of the City on December 3, when a crowd of 25,000 gathers for fireworks and entertainment. White candles are placed in all of the city's 1,200 windows, where they will burn every night of the month. Ongoing events include narrated illuminations, with cressets and bonfires, of the capitol, the governor's palace, taverns where patriots are said to have plotted revolution, and the market square buildings. The Fife and Drum Corps re-creates 18th-century military retreats. For more information: Colonial Williamsburg, Box C, Williamsburg, VA 23187; (800) 447-8679.

**DICKENS ON THE
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December 2 • 3

The Strand boasts the country's largest standing collection of commercial Victorian buildings; 17 blocks are transformed into a 19th-century London quarter teeming with thousands of revelers in Dickensian dress (some 150,000 people in all attend). Visitors can take morning tea in an Italianate ballroom, wander through a "forest" of decorated trees and wreaths, and listen to the largest outdoor concert of bell choirs in the world. Tickets cost \$6 for adults and \$3 for seniors and children, but are free to anyone in Victorian costume. For more information: Galveston Historical Foundation, Strand Visitors Center, 2016 Strand, Galveston, TX 77550; (409) 765-7834.

**CHRISTMAS AT THE
HENRY FORD MUSEUM
& GREENFIELD VILLAGE**
Dearborn, Mich.
December 2 • January 1

The world's largest indoor/outdoor museum puts up a four-story-high Christmas tree and a ginger-

bread village, and invites guests to a month of seasonal festivities. Some 100,000 visitors stroll through homes and buildings on 81 acres, watching costumed staff demonstrate antique holiday crafts and cooking, and learning about historical and regional Christmas customs. Most events continue throughout the month. Two technological discoveries will be commemorated: the first flight (December 17, 1903), and Thomas Edison's 1879 New Year's demonstration of the first light bulb. The Greenfield Village Theatre Company will perform Victor Herbert's 1903 operetta, *Babes in Toyland*; reservations are necessary. For more information or reservations: Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, Box 1970, Dearborn, MI 48121; (313) 271-1620.

**CHRISTMAS SING IN
THE CAVE**
Mammoth Cave National
Park, Ky.
December 15

In 1883, upon discovering Mammoth Cave's exceptional acoustics, a group of visitors cut down a cedar tree, dragged it inside, and held a Christmas celebration there. This year for the tenth year in a row the park will commemorate their party. On Friday at 7 P.M. some 700 guests are escorted hundreds of feet underground, into the world's most extensive cave system, where they are greeted by a 20-foot Christmas tree and choral singers on a hill. For the next hour traditional and contemporary carols echo through the cave. Cider and cookies, served in the Visitors Center, cap off the evening. Admission is free. For more information: Mammoth Cave National Park Visitors Center, Mammoth Cave, KY 42259; (502) 758-2251.

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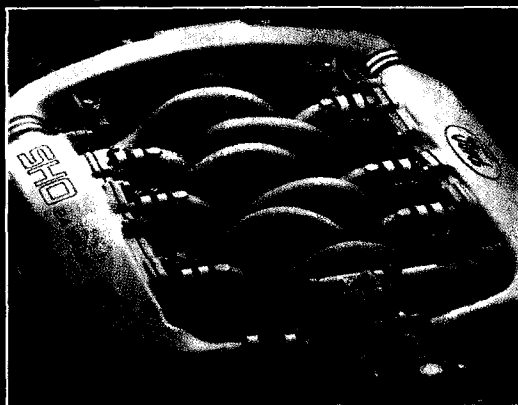
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well as Christian egalitarianism) was powerfully expressed by Paul when he wrote that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Christian universalism was reinforced by the universalism of the later Stoics, who created the ideal of an all-embracing city of reason—*cosmopolis*. Medieval Christians couched their universalist outlook in Hellenic terms. Thus two streams of thought, from Israel and Greece, flowed together. As a result the world today, although divided among nations often ferociously self-righteous and jealous, is haunted by the vision of a global community. War and national rivalry seem unavoidable, but they burden the human conscience. Searing poverty prevails in much of the world, as it always has, but no longer is it unthinkingly accepted in either the rich nations or the poor. There is a shadowy but widespread awareness, which Christianity has had much to do with creating, that one person cannot be indifferent to the destiny of another person anywhere on earth. It is hardly too much to say that the idea of the exalted individual is the spiritual center of Western politics. Although this idea is often forgotten and betrayed, were it erased from our minds our politics would probably become altogether what it is at present only in part—an affair of expediency and self-interest.

The exalted individual is not an exclusively Christian principle. There are two ways in which, without making any religious assumptions, we may sense the infinite worth of an individual. One way is love. Through personal love, or through the sympathy by which personal love is extended (although at the same time weakened), we sense the measureless worth of a few, and are able to surmise that what we sense in a few may be present in all. In short, to love some (it is, as Dostoevsky suggested, humanly impossible to love everyone) may give rise to the idea that all are worthy of love. Further, the idea of the exalted individual may become a secular value through reason, as it did for the Stoics. Reason tells me that each person is one and not more than one. Hence my claims upon others are rightfully matched by their claims upon me. Simple fairness, which even a child can understand, is implicitly egalitarian and universal; and it is reasonable.

Can love and reason, though, undergird our politics if faith suffers a further decline? That is doubtful. Love and reason are suggestive, but they lack definite political implications. Greeks of the Periclean Age, living at the summit of the most brilliant period of Western civilization, showed little consciousness of the notion that every individual bears an indefeasible and incomparable dignity. Today why should those who assume that God is dead entertain such a notion? This question is particularly compelling in view of a human characteristic very unlike exaltation.

The Fallen Individual

THE FALLEN INDIVIDUAL IS NOT SOMEONE OTHER than the exalted individual. Every human being is fallen and exalted both. This paradox is familiar to all informed Christians. Yet it is continually forgotten—partly, perhaps, because it so greatly complicates the task of dealing with evil in the world, and no doubt partly because we hate to apply it to ourselves; although glad to recall our exaltation, we are reluctant to remember our fallenness. It is vital to political understanding, however, to do both. If the concept of the exalted individual defines the highest value under God, the concept of the fallen individual defines the situation in which that value must be sought and defended.

The principle that a human being is sacred yet morally degraded is hard for common sense to grasp. It is apparent to most of us that some people are morally degraded. It is ordinarily assumed, however, that other people are morally upright and that these alone possess dignity. From this point of view all is simple and logical. The human race is divided roughly between good people, who possess the infinite worth we attribute to individuals, and bad people, who do not. The basic problem of life is for the good people to gain supremacy over, and perhaps eradicate, the bad people. This view appears in varied forms: in Marxism, where the human race is divided between a world-redeeming class and a class that is exploitative and condemned; in some expressions of American nationalism, where the division—at least, until recently—has been between "the free world" and demonic communism; in Western films, where virtuous heroes kill bandits and lawless Indians.

This common model of life's meaning is drastically irreligious, because it places reliance on good human beings and not on God. It has no room for the double insight that the evil are not beyond the reach of divine mercy nor the good beyond the need for it. It is thus antithetical to Christianity, which maintains that human beings are justified by God alone, and that all are sacred and none are good.

The proposition that none are good does not mean merely that none are perfect. It means that all are persistently and deeply inclined toward evil. All are sinful. In a few sin is so effectively suppressed that it seems to have been destroyed. But this is owing to God's grace, Christian principles imply, not to human goodness, and those in whom it has happened testify emphatically that this is so. Saints claim little credit for themselves.

Nothing in Christian doctrine so offends people today as the stress on sin. It is morbid and self-destructive, supposedly, to depreciate ourselves in this way. Yet the Christian view is not implausible. The twentieth century, not to speak of earlier ages (often assumed to be more barbaric), has displayed human evil in extravagant forms. Wars and

massacres, systematic torture and internment in concentration camps, have become everyday occurrences in the decades since 1914. Even in the most civilized societies subtle forms of callousness and cruelty prevail through capitalist and bureaucratic institutions.

Thus our own experience indicates that we should not casually dismiss the Christian concept of sin.

According to that concept, the inclination toward evil is primarily an inclination to exalt ourselves rather than allowing ourselves to be exalted by God. We exalt ourselves in a variety of ways: for example, by power, trying to control all the things and people around us; by greed, accumulating an inequitable portion of the material goods of the world; by self-righteousness, claiming to be wholly virtuous; and so forth. Self-exaltation is carried out sometimes by individuals, sometimes by groups. It is often referred to, in all of its various forms, as "pride."

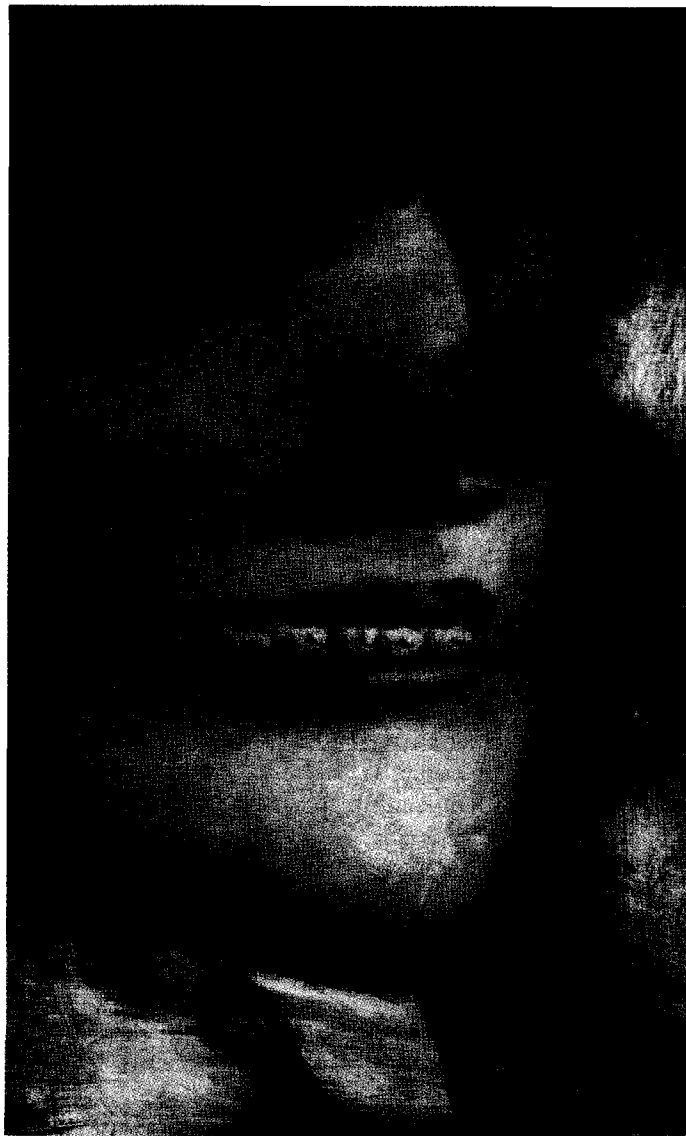
THE CHRISTIAN concept of sin is not adequately described, however, merely by saying that people frequently engage in evil actions. Our predisposition toward such actions is so powerful and so unyielding that it holds us captive. As Paul said, "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." This does not imply, of course, that I am entirely depraved. If I disapprove of my evil acts, then I am partly good. However, if I persist in evil in the face of my own disapproval, then I am not only partly evil but also incapable of destroying the evil in my nature and enthroning the good. I am, that is to say, a prisoner of evil, even

THE DANGERS OF CYNICISM ARE EVIDENT. BUT IDEALISM LOOKS BENIGN. IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND WHY ITS APPEARANCE IS MISLEADING.

and iniquitous choice on the part of every person. I persistently fail to attain goodness because I have turned away from goodness and set my face toward evil.

The political value of the doctrine of original sin lies in its recognition that our evil tendencies are not in the nature of a problem that we can rationally comprehend and deliberately solve. To say that the source of sin is sin is to say that sin is underivable and inexplicable. A sinful society is not like a malfunctioning machine, something to be checked and quickly repaired.

Sin is ironic. Its intention is self-exaltation, its result is self-debasement. In trying to ascend, we fall. The reason for this is not hard to understand. We are exalted by God; in declaring our independence from God, we cast ourselves down. In other words, sin concerns not just our actions and our nature but also the setting of our lives. By sin we cast ourselves into a degraded sphere of existence, a sphere Christians often call "the world." Human beings belong to the world through sin. They look at one another as objects; they manipulate, mutilate, and kill one another. In diverse ways, some subtle and some shocking, some relatively innocuous and some devastating, they continually depersonalize themselves and others. They behave as inhabitants of the world they have sinfully formed rather than



of the earth created by God. Original sin is the quiet determination, deep in everyone, to stay inside the world. Every sinful act is a violation of the personal being that continually, in freedom, vision, and love, threatens the world. The archetype of sin is the reduction of a person to the thing we call a corpse.

The Man-god Versus the God-man

WHEN THE PARADOX OF SIMULTANEOUS exaltation and fallenness collapses, it is replaced by either cynicism or (to use a term that is accurate but masks the destructive character of the attitude it refers to) idealism.

Cynicism measures the value of human beings by their manifest qualities and thus esteems them very slightly. It concludes, in effect, that individuals are not exalted, because they are fallen. Idealism refuses this conclusion. It insists that the value of human beings, or of some of them, is very great. It is not so simplistic, however, as to deny the incongruity of their essential value and their manifest qualities. Rather, it asserts that this incongruity can be resolved by human beings on their own, perhaps through political revolution or psychotherapy. Human beings can exalt themselves.

We shall dwell in this discussion on idealism, partly because idealism is much more tempting and therefore much more common than cynicism. Idealism is exhilarating, whereas cynicism, as anything more than a youthful experiment, is grim and discouraging. We shall dwell on idealism also because it is so much more dangerous than it looks. The dangers of cynicism are evident; that a general contempt for human beings is apt to be socially and politically destructive scarcely needs to be argued. But idealism looks benign. It is important to understand why its appearance is misleading.

Idealism in our time is commonly a form of collective pride. Human beings exalt themselves by exalting a group. Each one of course exalts the singular and separate self in some manner. In most people, however, personal pride needs reinforcement through a common ideal or emotion, such as nationalism. Hence the rise of collective pride. To exalt ourselves, we exalt a nation, a class, or even the whole of humanity in some particular manifestation like science. Such pride is alluring. It assumes grandiose and enthralling proportions yet it seems selfless, because not one person alone but a class or nation or some other collectivity is exalted. It can be at once more extreme and less offensive than personal pride.

To represent the uncompromising and worldly character of modern idealism we may appropriately use the image of the man-god. This image is a reversal of the Christian concept of the God-man, Christ. The order of the terms obviously is crucial. In the case of the God-man, it indicates the source of Christ's divinity as understood in Christian faith. God took the initiative. To reverse the or-

der of the terms and affirm the man-god is to say that human beings become divine on their own initiative. Here pride reaches its most extreme development. The dignity bestowed on human beings by God, in Christian faith, is now claimed as a quality that human beings can acquire through their own self-creating acts.

In using the concept of the man-god, I do not mean to suggest that divinity is explicitly attributed to certain human beings. Even propagandists, to say nothing of philosophers, are more subtle than that. What happens is simply that qualities traditionally attributed to God are shifted to a human group or type. The qualities thus assigned are various—perfect understanding, perhaps, or unfailing fairness. Illustrative are the views of three great intellectual figures, familiar to everyone, yet so diversely interpreted that the fundamental character of their thought—and their deep similarity—is sometimes forgotten.

Friedrich Nietzsche set forth the ideal of the man-god more literally and dramatically than any other writer. Nietzsche's thinking was grounded in a bitter repudiation of Christianity, and he devoted much of his life to scouring human consciousness in order to cleanse it of every Christian idea and emotion. In this way his philosophy became a comprehensive critique of Western civilization, as well as a foreshadowing of an alternative civilization. It is, as practically everyone now recognizes, remarkable in its range, subtlety, and complexity; Nietzsche is not easily classified or epitomized. It can nevertheless be argued that the dramatic center of his lifework lay in the effort to overthrow the standard of Christian love and to wipe out

THE ANNULMENT

for my nephew

After a time, because they could not love
one another as they could others,
what became of you recalled my infant brother,
lost in Limbo, his breath elusive
as crib death, waiting in a field for the world's end.
So when the Church unleashed them from their hearts,
undoing the words that were forever, through the dark
glass there was nothing but her earrings golden
in the moonlight and the torque of his neck as he
raced the motor of their Triumph. Though they
transgressed and wandered incalculably,
you rose out of them, lacquered from your journey
and muttering vowels like all the lost children,
souls breathed forth, sitting up in their graves to sing.

—Henri Cole

the idea that every human being deserves respect—leading Nietzsche to attack such norms in the field of politics as equality and democracy. If Christian faith is spurned, Nietzsche held, with the courage that was one of the sources of his philosophical greatness, then Christian morality must also be spurned. *Agape* has no rightful claim on our allegiance. And not only does *agape* lack all moral authority but it has a destructive effect on society and culture. It inhibits the rise of superior human beings to the heights of glory, which, we realize at last, are not inhabited by God. By exalting the common person, who is entirely lacking in visible distinction and glory, *agape* subverts the true order of civilization. The divine quality that Nietzsche claimed for humanity was power—the power not only of great political leaders like Julius Caesar and Napoleon but also of philosophers, writers, and artists, who impose intricate and original forms of order on chaotic material. Such power, in the nature of things, can belong only to a few. These few are human gods. Their intrinsic splendor overcomes the absurdity that erupted with the death of the Christian God, and justifies human existence.

Karl Marx is perhaps not only as well known among Christian intellectuals as even the most celebrated theologians but also as influential. The familiar saying “We are all Marxists now” dramatizes the fact that Marx’s views on such matters as class and capitalism are part of the furniture of the modern mind. Christian writers are not exceptions; spontaneously they think in some measure in Marxist terms. A considerable number of them can even be called Marxist Christians—an appellation fully justified in the case of most liberation theologians. Marx has in that sense become a familiar member of the Christian household. When he is thus domesticated, however, we tend to forget what he really thought. We may forget that he was as apocalyptically secular and humanistic as Nietzsche, even though he disdained the kind of elevated and poetic rhetoric that abounds in Nietzsche’s writings. He called for the entire transformation of human life by human beings, and this, in Marx’s mind, included the transformation of nature. The universe was to become radically—in its roots, in its sources and standards—human. True, like the Christians he scorned, and unlike Nietzsche, Marx was egalitarian. The transformation of humanity and being was envisioned as the work of multitudes, the proletariat, and not of exceptional individuals, and ahead lay justice and community rather than glorious solitude, as in Nietzsche. Nevertheless, Marx tacitly claimed for the proletariat qualities much like those attributed in the Old Testament to God—omniscience, righteousness, and historical sovereignty, all devoted to avenging past wrongs and transfiguring human existence.

Sigmund Freud, of course, avoided both the rhetoric of redemption and the thought; he regarded any great change in the character of human beings or the condi-

tions of human life as unlikely, and by intention was a scientist, not a prophet or a revolutionary. He belongs among the heralds of the man-god, however, because of the conviction that underlay all his psychological investigations. Disorders of the soul, which for Christians derive in one way or another from sin, and hence in their ultimate origins are mysterious, Freud believed to be scientifically explicable. From this conviction it followed that the healing work Christians believe to be dependent on divine grace Freud could assign altogether to human therapy. The soul was thus severed from God (for Freud, a childish illusion) and placed in the province of human understanding and action. Not that psychoanalysis and Christianity are in all ways mutually exclusive; the many Christians who have learned from Freud testify to the contrary. But for Freud and his major followers, psychoanalysis is a comprehensive faith, not merely a set of useful hypotheses and techniques. As a faith, it attributes to humanity alone powers and responsibilities that Christians regard as divine. Human beings are exalted by virtue of purely human faculties. Freud’s attitude of resignation was a matter mainly of temperament; his methods, theories, and basic assumptions have reinforced the efforts of human beings to seize the universal sovereignty that Christians assign exclusively to God.

Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud represent a movement by no means restricted to those who consciously follow any one of them or even to those familiar with their writings. Not only are we “all Marxists now”; it could be said with nearly equal justification that we are all Nietzscheans and Freudians. Most of us have come to assume that we ourselves are the authors of human destiny. The term “man-god” may seem extreme, but I believe that our situation is extreme. Christianity poses sweeping alternatives—destiny and fate, redemption and eternal loss, the Kingdom of God and the void of Hell. From centuries of Christian culture and education we have come habitually to think of life as structured by such extremes. Hence Christian faith may fade, but we still want to live a destiny rather than a mere life, to transform the conditions of human existence and not merely to effect improvements, to establish a perfect community and not simply a better society. Losing faith in the God-man, we inevitably begin to dream of the man-god, even though we often think of the object of our new faith as something impersonal and innocuous, like science, thus concealing from ourselves the radical nature of our dreams.

Political Idolatry

THE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS ARE PROFOUND. Most important is that all logical grounds for attributing an ultimate and immeasurable dignity to every person, regardless of outward character, disappear. Some people may gain dignity from their achievements in art, literature, or politics, but the

notion that all people without exception—the most base, the most destructive, the most repellent—have equal claims on our respect becomes as absurd as would be the claim that all automobiles or all horses are of equal excellence. The standard of *agape* collapses. It becomes explicable only on Nietzsche's terms: as a device by which the weak and failing exact from the strong and distinguished a deference they do not deserve. Thus the spiritual center of Western politics fades and vanishes. If the principle of personal dignity disappears, the kind of political order we are used to—one structured by standards such as liberty for all human beings and equality under the law—becomes indefensible.

Nietzsche's stature is owing to the courage and profundity that enabled him to make this all unmistakably clear. He delineated with overpowering eloquence the consequences of giving up Christianity, and every like view of the universe and humanity. His approval of those consequences and his hatred of Christianity give force to his argument. Many would like to think that there are no consequences—that we can continue treasuring the life and welfare, the civil rights and political authority, of every person without believing in a God who renders such attitudes and conduct compelling. Nietzsche shows that we cannot. We cannot give up the Christian God—and the transcendence given other names in other faiths—and go on as before. We must give up Christian morality too. If the God-man is nothing more than an illusion, the same thing is true of the idea that every individual possesses incalculable worth.

It is true, as we have seen, that love and reason provide intimations of such worth—but intimations alone; they provide little basis for overruling the conclusions of our senses. The denial of the God-man and of God's merciful love of sinful humanity is a denial of destiny, and without destiny there is simply life. But life calls forth respect only in proportion to its intensity and quality. Except in the case of infants and children, we ordinarily look on those lacking in purposeful vitality with pity or disgust. Respect we spontaneously reserve for the strong and creative. If it is life we prize, then institutions that protect and care for people whose lives are faltering are worse than senseless. It is hard to think of anyone else, with the single exception of Dostoevsky, who has understood all of this as profoundly as did Nietzsche.

Marx certainly did not. His mind was on matters of a different kind, matters less philosophical. The result was an illogical humanitarianism. Marx was incensed by the squalor in which the common people of his time were forced to live and by the harsh conditions and endless hours of their work. Marx sympathized deeply with the downtrodden and disinherited. But this expressed his personal qualities, not his philosophy or faith. His philosophy was a materialism that can be interpreted in differing ways but that implied, at the very least, that reality was not created by and is not governed by God; his faith

was in science and human will. He provided no philosophical or religious grounds whatever for the idea that every person must be treated with care. In spite of Marx's humanitarianism, therefore, there is a link between Marxist thought and the despotic regimes that have ruled in his name. It is perfectly true, as his defenders aver, that Marx adhered to political principles quite unlike those manifest in the purges and prison camps of the Soviet Union. That such practices should claim the authority of his name is thus outrageous in a sense. Nonetheless, the connection between Marx himself and modern Marxist despots is not entirely accidental. They share the principle that a single individual does not necessarily matter.

If the denial of the God-man has destructive logical implications, it also has dangerous emotional consequences. Dostoevsky wrote that a person "cannot live without worshipping something." Anyone who denies God must worship an idol—which is not necessarily a wooden or metal figure. In our time we have seen ideologies, groups, and leaders receive divine honors. People proud of their critical and discerning spirit have rejected Christ and bowed down before Hitler, Stalin, Mao, or some other secular savior.

When disrespect for individuals is combined with political idolatry, the results can be atrocious. Both the logical and the emotional foundations of political decency are destroyed. Equality becomes nonsensical and breaks down under attack from one or another human god. Consider Lenin: as a Marxist, and like Marx an exponent of equality, under the pressures of revolution he denied equality in principle—except as an ultimate goal—and so systematically nullified it in practice as to become the founder of modern totalitarianism. When equality falls, universality is likely also to fall. Nationalism or some other form of collective pride becomes virulent, and war unrestrained. Liberty, too, is likely to vanish; it becomes a heavy personal and social burden when no God justifies and sanctifies the individual in spite of all personal deficiencies and failures.

The idealism of the man-god does not, of course, bring as an immediate and obvious consequence a collapse into unrestrained nihilism. We all know many people who do not believe in God and yet are decent and admirable. Western societies, as highly secularized as they are, retain many humane features. Not even tacitly has our sole governing maxim become the one Dostoevsky thought was bound to follow the denial of the God-man: "Everything is permitted."

This may be, however, because customs and habits formed during Christian ages keep people from professing and acting on such a maxim even though it would be logical for them to do so. If that is the case, our position is precarious, for good customs and habits need spiritual grounds, and if those are lacking, they will gradually, or perhaps suddenly in some crisis, crumble.



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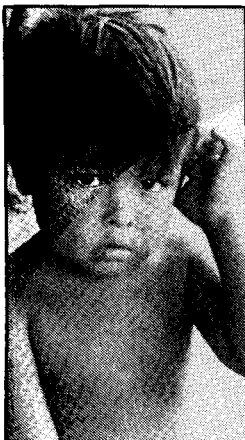
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To what extent are we now living on moral savings accumulated over many centuries but no longer being replenished? To what extent are those savings already severely depleted? Again and again we are told by advertisers, counselors, and other purveyors of popular wisdom that we have a right to buy the things we want and to live as we please. We should be prudent and farsighted, perhaps (although even those modest virtues are not greatly emphasized), but we are subject ultimately to no standard but self-interest. If nihilism is most obvious in the lives of wanton destroyers like Hitler, it is nevertheless present also in the lives of people who live purely as pleasure and convenience dictate.

And aside from intentions, there is a question concerning consequences. Even idealists whose good intentions for the human race are pure and strong are still vulnerable to fate because of the pride that causes them to act ambitiously and recklessly in history. Initiating chains of unforeseen and destructive consequences, they are often overwhelmed by results drastically at variance with their humane intentions. Modern revolutionaries have willed liberty and equality for everyone, not the terror and despotism they have actually created. Social reformers in the United States were never aiming at the great federal bureaucracy or at the pervasive dedication to entertainment and pleasure that characterizes the welfare state they brought into existence. There must always be a gap between intentions and results, but for those who forget that they are finite and morally flawed the gap may become a chasm. Not only Christians but almost everyone today feels the fear that we live under the sway of forces that we have set in motion—perhaps in the very process of industrialization, perhaps only at certain stages of that process, as in the creation of nuclear power—and that threaten our lives and are beyond our control.

There is much room for argument about these matters. But there is no greater error in the modern mind than the assumption that the God-man can be repudiated with impunity. The man-god may take his place and become the author of deeds wholly unintended and the victim of terrors starkly in contrast with the benign intentions lying at their source. The irony of sin is in this way reproduced in the irony of idealism: exalting human beings in their supposed virtues and powers, idealism undermines them. Exciting fervent expectations, it leads toward despair.

Ideology and Ambiguity

PRACTICALLY EVERYONE TODAY AGREES THAT “being good,” in a political sense, depends on recognizing the measureless worth of the human being. When this recognition is translated into ideological terms, such as liberalism and conservatism, however, agreement vanishes. The main moral assumption underlying the discussion above becomes controver-

sial. Nevertheless, we have to ask what the ideological implications of Christianity are, for this is simply to inquire about the practical meaning of the ideas that we have been discussing and thus to carry the argument to its logical conclusion.

In asking about ideology, however, we immediately encounter something that seemingly undermines any ideological commitment. This is an implicit political ambiguity. This ambiguity is deeply rooted in Christian principles, and must at the outset be taken into account.

In the Christian view, while every individual is exalted, society is not. On the contrary, every society is placed in question, for a society is a mere worldly order and a mere human creation and can never do justice to the glory of the human beings within it. The exaltation of the individual reveals the baseness of society. It follows that our political obligations are indeterminate and equivocal. If we recognize what God has done—so Christian principles imply—we shall be limitlessly respectful of human beings but wary of society. Yet human beings live in society, and we meet them there or not at all. Hence we cannot stand wholly apart from society without failing in our responsibilities to the human beings whom God has exalted. So far as we are responsive to God, we must live within human kingdoms as creatures destined to be fellow citizens in God’s Kingdom. This obligation gives rise to a political stance that is ambiguous and, in a world of devastatingly unambiguous ideologies, unique: humane and engaged, but also hesitant and critical.

Christianity implies skepticism concerning political ideals and plans. For Christianity to be wedded indissolubly to any of them (as it often has been, “Christian socialism” and Christian celebrations of “the spirit of democratic capitalism” being examples) is idolatrous and thus subversive of Christian faith.

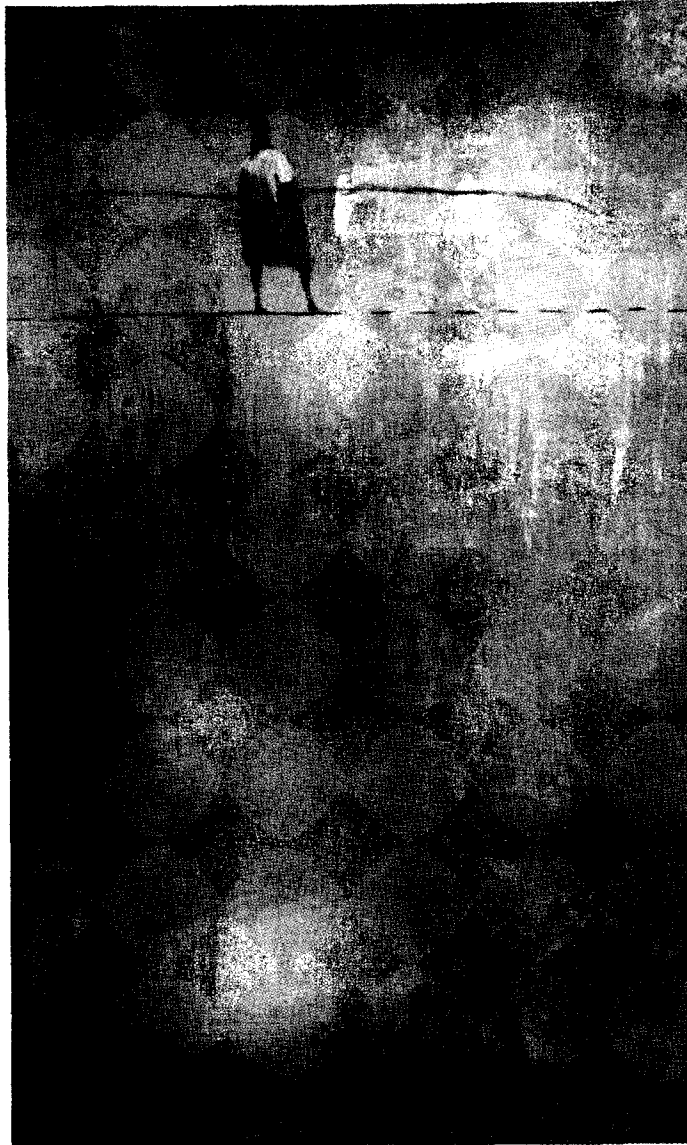
Trying to take into account both the profound evil in human nature and the immense hope in the human situation, as Christians must, leads inevitably to what reformers and radicals—particularly those of the Third World, surrounded as they are by impoverished multitudes—are apt to regard as fatal equivocations. It leads, as I have already indicated, to a critical spirit and to qualified commitments. It would be easy to charge that such a posture reflects the self-interest and complacency of those who do not suffer from the injustice characterizing existing structures. Equivocation, it may be said, is one of the luxuries of bourgeois life in the industrial world.

Still, a Christian in the United States, without being particularly discerning or morally sensitive, can see at least two things not so clearly visible to Third World Christian writers, particularly those liberation theologians who long for immediate social transformation. One of these is the universal disaster of revolution. There is perhaps not a single example in our time of a determined

effort to produce swift and sweeping change which has not ended in tyranny; such efforts have often also ended in abominations, such as those witnessed in recent times in Cambodia, incalculably worse than those perpetrated by the old social order.

The second thing a Christian in a prosperous industrial nation can see is visible because it is near at hand: that life can be culturally vulgar, morally degraded, and spiritually vacuous even under conditions of substantial justice. Not that justice has been fully achieved in the United States. But it has been approximated closely enough for us to begin to gauge its significance. We can begin to see that justice does not necessarily mean an entirely good society. The great masses of people in the United States enjoy historically unprecedented prosperity, in stark contrast with conditions in the Third World. Accompanying this prosperity, however, are signs—too numerous and flagrant to need mentioning—of moral cynicism, spiritual frivolity, and despair. If revolutions make plain the power of sin—its ability to captivate idealistic reformers—mass society displays the ingenuity of sin. Human beings in their passion for justice have not devised institutions that they cannot in their pride and selfishness outwit.

It may seem that the ideological meaning of Christianity is becoming clear: Christianity is solidly, if covertly, on the side of the status quo. It is conservative. There are good reasons for arguing, however, that Christianity cannot logically be conservative but is rather—in its own distinctive fashion—radical.



CHRISTIANITY IS RADICAL,
BUT IT IS ALSO HESITANT. HESITATION
EXPRESSES A CONSCIOUSNESS
OF THE MYSTERY OF BEING AND THE
DIGNITY OF EVERY PERSON.

A Hesitant Radicalism

THE CHRISTIAN record in the annals of reform, it must be granted, is not impressive. Christians have accepted, and sometimes actively supported, slavery, poverty, and almost every other common social evil. They have often condemned such evils in principle but failed to oppose them in practice. Faith does not necessarily conquer selfishness and is particularly unlikely to do so when connected with an established religion and thus with privileged groups. That Christianity has in various times and places, and in various ways, been an established religion is perhaps the major reason why it has been implicated in injustices such as slavery, serfdom, and the oppressive wage labor of early capitalism.

Nevertheless, Christianity in essence is not conservative. The notion that it is (the historical record aside) probably stems mainly from the fact that Christians share with conservatives a consciousness of the fallibility of human beings. The two camps occupy common anthropological ground. But the consciousness of human fallibility is far keener among Christians than among conservatives, for Christians are skeptical of human arrangements that typically command deep respect in conservatives. Thus, Christians cannot logically assume that the antiquity of institutions provides any assurance of their justice or efficacy. They realize, if they consult Christian principles, that long-standing customs and traditions embody not only the wisdom of generations but also the wickedness—in particular, the determina-

tion of dominant groups to preserve their powers and privileges.

Christians are also mistrustful of aristocracies and elites. Conservatives typically commend the rule of long-ascendant minorities, those certified by the established order as wise and noble. But Paul, addressing early Christians in Corinth, noted that "not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth." New Testament passages indicate that Christ had a special concern for the despised and disinherited, the ignorant and unsophisticated. "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise." The attitude expressed in such a passage is remote from the typical conservative reverence for minorities of inherited rank and traditional learning.

Conservatives (like non-Christian radicals) commonly assume that sin can be circumvented by human skill. In the conservative view, allowing only those institutional changes that are gradual and protracted, and according authority to traditional elites, will accomplish this. For Christians, sin is circumvented only by grace. It is certainly not circumvented by society, the form that sinful men and women give to the fallen world.

In America conservatives believe that sin is effectively redirected to the common good through the market. The alchemy of capitalist competition transmutes sin into virtue. But it is difficult to see how any Christian who fully grasps Christian principles can be an unqualified supporter of capitalism. Insofar as the market governs social relations, people are forced into acquisitive rivalry; to count in any way on a gift of "daily bread" rather than on money in the bank would be the mark of a fool. Acquisitive success is candidly equated with virtue and personal worth naively measured in material terms. Charity is often bestowed on the needy, but it is a matter of personal generosity, not of justice or community; and it is unsanctioned in capitalist theory. No principles could be more thoroughly anticommunal than those of capitalism. Indeed, capitalism is probably more anticommunal in theory than in practice, for human beings cannot be as consistently selfish and calculating as capitalist doctrine calls on them to be. Capitalism has one bond with Christianity—the premise that human beings are ordinarily selfish. A system that enables an industrial society to achieve a degree of order and efficiency without depending on either human goodness or governmental coercion cannot be entirely despised. Nevertheless, even if capitalism worked as well as its supporters claim, it would by Christian standards fail morally and spiritually.

But if Christians are more pessimistic about human beings and about social devices like the market than are conservatives, how can they act on the side of serious social change? How can they do anything but cling to all institutions, however unjust, that counteract the chaotic potentialities of human beings and achieve some sort of order? There are three answers to these questions.

First of all, Christian ideas place one in a radical—that is, critical and adverse—relationship to established institutions. The Kingdom of God is a judgment on existing society, and a symbol of its impermanence. Jesus was crucified because his presence and preaching were profoundly unsettling to reigning religious and political groups. Jesus did not seek the violent overthrow of these groups, but neither did he show much concern for their stability.

Further, these attitudes have to be acted on. This is a matter of spiritual integrity. To anticipate the coming of the Kingdom of God is merely sentimental, a private frivolity, unless one tries to reshape society according to the form of the imminent community, a form defined by equality and universality and requiring particular attention to the disinherited and oppressed.

Finally, however, to take it for granted that all attempted reforms will fail would be as presumptuous as to assume that they will succeed. It is not only sinful human beings who are at work in history, Christians believe, but God as well. *Agape* is not merely a standard of personal conduct, powerless over events. In exalting individuals, it discloses the inner meaning of history. To practice love is to be allied with the deepest currents of life. From a Christian standpoint, a frightened refusal of all social change would be highly inappropriate.

Clearly the immediate political aims of Christians are not necessarily different from those of secular radicals and reformers. Their underlying attitudes are different, however. The Christian sense of the depth and stubbornness of evil in human beings, along with the faith that the universe under the impetus of grace is moving toward radical re-creation, gives a distinctive cast to the Christian conception of political action and social progress.

Secular conceptions of reform are apt to be characterized by optimistic oversimplifications and distortions. American reformers, for example, typically assume that human beings are both reasonable and just and that beneficent social change is therefore easy. The main thing necessary, after identifying a problem, is to devise and propagate a rational solution. Poverty, crime, class conflict, war, and all other great social evils can gradually but surely be eliminated. Good will and intelligence, well organized and fully informed (through the studies of social scientists), will suffice. Such illusions stem from a dilemma noted above. It is difficult for secular reformers to reconcile their sense of the dignity of individuals with a recognition of the selfishness and perversity of individuals. They are thus led persistently to exaggerate human goodness. Trying to match their view of human nature with their belief in human dignity, they fail to see how human beings actually behave or to understand the difficulties and complexities of reform.

Tocqueville suggested approvingly that Christianity tends to make a people "circumspect and undecided," with "its impulses . . . checked and its work unfinished."

ished." This expresses well the spirit of reform inherent in Christian faith. Christianity is radical, but it is also hesitant. This is partly, of course, because Christianity restrains our self-assurance. Efforts at social transformation must always encounter unforeseen complexities, difficulties, limits, and tragedies. Caution is in order. But Christian hesitancy has deeper grounds than prudence and more compelling motives than wariness of practical blunders. Hesitation expresses a consciousness of the mystery of being and the dignity of every person. It provides a moment for consulting destiny. Recent decades have seen heroic political commitments in behalf of social reform, but hesitation has been evident mainly in the service of self-interest. Christian faith, however, suggests that hesitation should have a part in our most conscientious deeds. It is a formality that is fitting when we cross the frontier between meditation and action. And like all significant formalities, it is a mark of respect—for God and for the creatures with whom we share the earth.

SOME WILL DISLIKE THE IMPLICATION THAT "BEING good" consists in being radical; others will think it strange to link radicalism with hesitation or religious faith. I suggest, however, that the main task facing political goodness in our time is that of maintaining responsible hope. Responsible hope is hesitant because it is cognizant of the discouraging actualities of collective life; it is radical because it measures those actualities against the highest standards of imagination and faith. Whether so paradoxical a stance can be sustained without transcendental connections—without God—is doubtful.

We live in a disheartening century—"the worst so far," as someone has said. There have never before been wars so destructive as the series of conflicts that erupted in 1914; never have tyrannies been so frenzied and all-consuming as those established by Nazism and communism. All great political causes have failed. Socialism has eventuated in the rule either of privileged ideological bureaucrats or of comfortable, listless masses; liberal reform in America has at least for a time passed away, leaving stubborn injustices and widespread cynicism; conservatism has come to stand for an illogical combination of market economics and truculent nationalism. Most of the human race lives in crushing poverty, and the privileged minority in societies where industrial abundance undergirds a preoccupation with material comfort and an atmosphere of spiritual inanity.

It is not just that hope itself is difficult to maintain in our situation. One is forced, so to speak, to hope alone. After all that has happened, in what party or cause or movement can one find a hope that can be unreservedly shared? Inherent in the disheartenment of our century is the impossibility of believing any longer in political commitment. And to draw back from commitment is to face

political solitude. The individual must find a way of standing for authentic values with little or no human support. A radicalism that is hesitant must also be solitary.

If the great causes and movements all have failed, and unqualified political commitments have become impossible, why not, as Paul asked, eat and drink, since tomorrow we die? This is a question that secular reason should take far more seriously than it ever has.

It is a question to which all of us need an answer. The need is partly political. There can be no decent politics unless many people can resist the historical discouragement so natural in our times. The consumer society and fascism exemplify the possible outcome when nations are populated predominantly by people incapable of the hesitation in which reality needs to be faced or the hope in which it must be judged and reshaped.

The need is also personal. In its depths the life of an individual is historical and political because it is one with the lives of all human beings. To despair of history is to despair of one's own humanity. Today we are strongly tempted to split the individual and history, the personal and the political. When this occurs, personal being is truncated and impoverished. People in earlier times of bewilderment and disillusionment, such as the era of the downfall of the ancient city-state system, were similarly tempted, and a standard of life first clearly enunciated by Epicurus in the aftermath of the Macedonian conquest of the city-states is still, in the twentieth century, attractive. Epicurus called for withdrawal from public life and political activity; he argued that everything essential to one's humanity, such as friendship, can be found in the private sphere. Personal life thus is salvaged from the raging torrent of history. But it is also mutilated, for it is severed from the human situation in its global scope and its political contours.

The absorption of Americans in the pleasures of buying and consuming, of mass entertainment and sports, suggests an Epicurean response to our historical trials. The dangers—erosion of the grounds of political health and impairment of personal being—are evident.

Being good politically means not only valuing the things that are truly valuable but also having the strength to defend those things when they are everywhere being attacked and abandoned. Such strength is exemplified by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great German pastor and theologian, who uncompromisingly opposed the Nazi regime from the beginning, even to the extent of returning to Germany from a guaranteed haven in America to join the anti-Hitler resistance. Arrested by the Gestapo, he was killed at the end of the war. One of Bonhoeffer's prayers, composed in prison, was, "Give me the hope that will deliver me from fear and faintheartedness." Much that I have tried to say in the preceding pages might be summarized simply in this question: If we turn away from transcendence, from God, what will deliver us from a politically fatal fear and faintheartedness? □

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ABOUT SCOTCH
TO ORDER A DRINK.**

You're thirsty for Scotch and water. But if you just say "Scotch and water," you're taking a chance on mediocrity. Say "Ballantine's and water," and you'll get a smooth, mellow, smoky Scotch with a hint of Island peat and a breath of Highland smoke. Your water will taste a lot better, too.

Ballantine's.

THE TRUE TASTE OF SCOTCH.



**ENOUGH
INFORMATION
ABOUT SCOTCH
TO HAVE A CONVERSATION.**

You're out on the town with a friend. But you hesitate before ordering the same old Scotch.

Peering over the bar, you spot a bottle of Ballantine's Finest.

"Hmm. I haven't had that in a while."

"One of the better blends," your friend says.

"Number one in Europe."

So you order Ballantine's and water.

"It has 42 different single malts in it," he says.

"Really? Does that matter?"

"Only if you like your Scotch to be smooth."

You take a sip.

"It is smooth. How come it tastes smoky?"

Your friend explains, "That's from Highland single malts in the blend. Taste it again. It has an earthy flavor, too."

You do and it does.

"That's peat. From the Scottish islands. See, with blended Scotch, the single malts are married together to enhance each other. But you can still taste the individual flavors."

"You know too much. How am I supposed to keep up with that?"

"We have time," he says. "Another round?"

**ENOUGH
INFORMATION ABOUT
SCOTCH TO
OPEN A DISTILLERY.**

First, you need water. Scotland has more than enough, because it rains so much. And the best, because on its way to the burns and lochs, Scottish water is naturally filtered and purified as it flows through granite or peat.

Second, you need peat. Peat, to put it delicately, is a layer of compressed vegetable matter covering about 1,700,000

acres in Scotland. That's 11% of the entire country. That's a lot of peat. You can taste the peat in a great Scotch like Ballantine's Finest. What you do is cut it into logs and burn it in kilns to stop the malting of your barley.

Third, you need barley. Barley is one of those grains that thrives where you might think only rocks would grow. Which is why it does so well in Scotland. You malt your barley by soaking it in water, then drying it over the peaty fire. Then you grind it, mix in hot water and let it sit for a few hours. Add a little yeast to the liquid and the sugars turn into alcohol. The barley has done its job. You can feed it to cattle.

Fourth, you need the handsome cattle. Some Highland cattle, of the happiest cattle in the world live in Scotland. (Not to mention some of the best tasting.)

Fifth, you need a still. These are the funny looking copper pots without which there would be no Scotch. It is said that Aristotle invented distillation. But sadly, he never lived to taste a fine Scotch like



Aristotle. He would have enjoyed Ballantine's.

Ballantine's. After distillation, you have whisky. Which longs for barrels in which to grow old.

Sixth, you need barrels. There aren't many oak trees left in Scotland. At least not enough to age Ballantine's Finest.

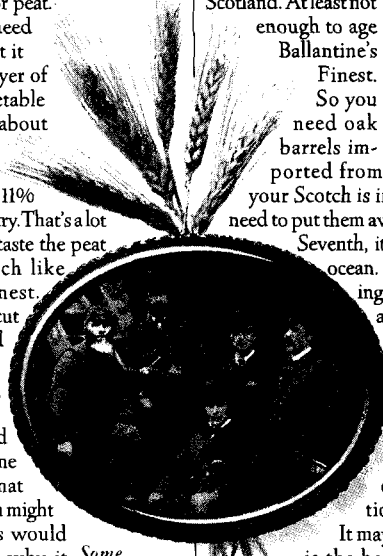
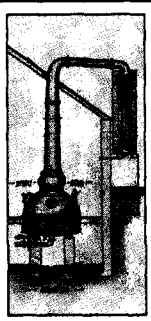
So you need oak barrels imported from America. Once your Scotch is in the barrels, you need to put them away for a long time.

Seventh, it helps to have an ocean. There's a refreshing scent of sea air in a select few of the single malts used in Ballantine's. Some say it creeps into barrels stored near the ocean. In any case, it adds distinction to the Scotch.

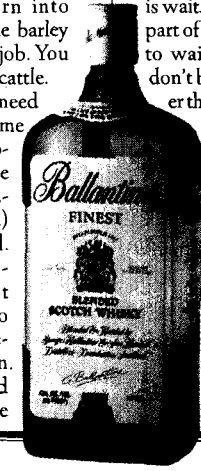
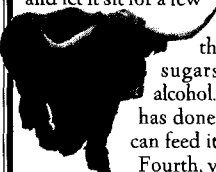
It may be that Scotland is the best place to make Scotch precisely because there's no point more than 70 miles from the sea. Kansas is not a good place to make Scotch. And last, you'll need patience. The only thing left to do is wait. If you want your Scotch to be part of Ballantine's Finest, you'll have to wait quite a while, because we don't blend any malt whisky younger than five years. Patience is essential when starting your own distillery. But, as you've read this far, it would seem that you have a good supply of it.

Whew! If the thought of all this work makes you feel a bit tattered, you might enjoy a glass of Ballantine's Finest. Maybe you don't need your own distillery after all.

Please write. We welcome all letters.



Kansas. Too far from the North Sea.



Ballantine's.

THE TRUE TASTE OF SCOTCH.

Ballantine's.

THE TRUE TASTE OF SCOTCH.

Write to: Ballantine's P.O. Box 8925 Universal City, CA 91608.

A Short Story



The Announcement

by John Hersey

"MOTHER'S A BIT OLD-FASHIONED," Gordon said. In spite of his confidence in Beverly, he couldn't help feeling apprehensive about this first meeting. "Still wears hairpins, you know. I think they're made of deer horn. She winds a braid around on top like a crown."

"You don't have to . . . p-paint her," Bev said. "I'm going to see her with my own eyes, right? How much f-farther?"

"We're not far now. Just the other side of Pleasantville."

He left the exact distance hanging. In a moderate hurry, he kept the rented Skylark ticking along at sixty. Beverly looked just right to him. She was all in black, in an off-the-shoulder taffeta cocktail dress, with a triangular black silk shawl, knotted in front, so that there were only glimpses of skin. Bev's instincts were so unerring: His mother often chose black herself for cheerful occasions. Beverly's curly dark hair was blowing in the breeze from her half-opened window. She had understated her makeup that morning—how much she understood!

Gordon was especially nervous because his mother's Thanksgiving dinner had had to be postponed by a day. As usual, brother Peter, coming from Minneapolis with his family, had made a mess of things; there had been some kind of slip-up with their train reservations. Gordon knew that his mother, with her great gift of denial, would sit through the meal in style and wouldn't show a single outward sign of distress. But Thanksgiving dinner on the day after!

Thanksgiving meant everything to his mother. The resilience of the New England settlers was in her arteries—the grit and bend of those forebears, who could survive a first blizzardy winter, scrape at hardscrabble soil in a thin spring, plant a fishhead in every corn hill, pray away drought and the crashing down of hailstones, and, at last, stack the surviving stalks and roll in the huge pumpkins and shoot a wild turkey, and then feast, and murmur in gratitude to a jealous God. That Puritan side was only a part of her, though. She was, as well, a sensuous family

woman, and Thanksgiving dinners were her joy and her victory. As children, Gordon and his brother, Peter, had basked in the sunlight of her nurture: strange to think of that hot motherly effulgence, because she so liked shadowy places and somber clothes. She had devoted herself to her husband—dead now ten years—with a quirky tenderness that had some cold spots in it; she had quarreled with him often, perhaps to starch up a certain rumpled softness in him, and Gordon had come to see that she had always lost the arguments but had somehow won by losing.

This mysterious femininity, yielding yet powerful, Victorian yet Emersonian, too, had been what Gordon had looked for in a wife the first time, when he came back from the war in the South Pacific; but marrying an apparent clone of his mother hadn't worked. Sue hadn't turned out to fit the mold, and Gordon and she had had a rough parting, four years ago, in the autumn when Eisenhower beat Stevenson for the second time. No kids, thank goodness. Badly burned, he had been alone for three and a half years, and then had fallen in love with this complicated Beverly, who was not in the least like his mother. He and Bev had long since decided to marry, but for some reason—perhaps because Bev was fourteen

years younger than he—he had postponed bringing her to meet his mother until now, the special occasion of a Thanksgiving dinner, when, he thought, his mother's euphoria, as

*Gordon's mission was perilous:
he was about to introduce to his mother
the woman he planned to marry*

well as the sweet condiments in little bowls on her table (Beverly had a sugar-tooth), might ease the way on both sides. "Bev has a funny little stammer," he had said to his mother on the phone after accepting for both of them, as if that would explain all about Beverly in advance.

AS THEY APPROACHED CHAPPAQUA, GORDON'S familiarity since childhood with the shapes of the hills thereabouts, his memory of each rough-cut stone bridge on the parkway, his long acquaintance even with certain noble trees along the road, especially some of the huge willows in the low places—first of



all flora to put out yellowy growth in the spring, last of all to trail their drying yellowy feathers in the fall—these mnemonics of homing stirred up in his senses a rush of remembered small pleasures: the sight of his mother unwrapping a stick of butter and leaning down to let Barabas, the old Lab, lick the traces off the wax paper; the taste of cinnamon toast; diving into huge piles of leaves, when his father raked them up on Saturday afternoons in the fall; deep sounds, of cello and bassoon, on the Capehart; the gentle sidling of Whitefoot, the only cat he'd ever liked, snaking against his calf with a flirtatious after-touch of her tail. All the years. He drove with care.

Then they were there. "Good God," Beverly said

when they drove up under the darkness of the porte cochere. Gordon laughed. Yes, the house was a beast. Heavy-timbered, mouse-colored, surrounded by huge red maples that even with bared limbs fought off most of the afternoon's hazy light, the house loomed as a reminder of an era of aspiration and complacency that was, thank heaven, long gone. This monument to Daddy—Gordon called his father that—was planted in that purportedly tranquil zone, discovered by self-made men in the 1920s, of the one-hour commute to town on the Harlem Division of the New York Central. Never mind. To Gordon, at thirty-eight, it was still home.

Gordon gave one rap on the cast-iron knocker—a

head, was it Samson's, or a human-looking lion's?—and opened up the heavy door, which squealed its welcome on long black strap hinges. He waved Bev in ahead of him. Here came Uncle Solbert and his wife, hurrying in good manners out of the living room to greet the newcomers.

"Gordie, boy!" Uncle Solbert roared with a second-drink cordiality. Did Gordon remember that Uncle Bert was partial to old-fashioned?

"Happy Thanksgiving," Aunt Beth cried, already all too happy herself. She, too. Apparently everyone was going to pretend that they had gathered on the right day.

"This is Beverly Zimmer," Gordon said. Bev was blinking. Gordon saw that she had forgotten to straighten her blown hair. She looked wild. The delicate wrinkles in her forehead showed up as she stood right under the down-pouring light of the hall ceiling fixture.

Now all the others, except for Gordon's mother, came rushing into the hall in a stampede of curiosity. Here were brother Peter and his Molly, not the least bit shamefaced. Introductions kept Gordon busy. Here were his mother's ancient dear friends Miss Rankin and Miss Alderhoff. And here was Mr. Cannahan. Mr. Cannahan's eyes did a little dance when he saw Beverly's shawl slip to one side as she shook hands. "How beautiful," he murmured. And here was awful Freddie, Peter and Molly's son; was he still at Lawrenceville, or had he been kicked out? And sullen little niece Caroline, who, Gordon noticed, had remarkable breasts for—what was she? a thirteen-year-old?

"Where's Mom?"

"K-k-k-Katy, in the k-kitchen," Uncle Solbert sang, off-key. Gordon felt a hot blush rise up his neck to his cheeks. His mother obviously hadn't passed on the little secret about Bev.

But there she came. His mother was wearing a charcoal-gray dress, which was almost entirely hidden by a blue wraparound apron. She had something in a dish in her hand. Her piercing dark eyes were looking not at him but at Beverly, and he was astonished by the sharp pang of joy and pride he felt when he saw the genuine warmth in the gathers of crow's-feet—the smile lines—around his mother's eyes. She went straight to Beverly and, holding the dish out to one side, leaned forward and kissed her, but really kissed her, not just the air beside her cheek, and spoke a single word, "Beverly."

Beverly took a step backward and said, "I'm so . . . t-tickled to meet you." At once she had offered Gordon's mother the tiny hesitation and catch that he found so entrancing: a pause, as verbal choices came to her, and then a little splutter of emotion, tripping over a plosive consonant, as she settled on the one word that sounded a bit odd but must have been, as usual, exactly what she meant.

Gordon's mother greeted him with a tight one-armed hug and then turned and hurried back to the kitchen,

holding the dish high in her right hand to show the company why she was in such haste. Everyone drifted back to the living room. As they walked in, Gordon heard music coming from the old Capehart. Sibelius's Seventh. Ah, yes, one of his mother's favorites, that swooping deep-toned utterance, sad as whale song, from a country where for months the sun never came up over the horizon. Yet the sound was part of what made Gordon's spirits rise; it belonged, as he did, in this room, with its dark mahogany wainscoting and twisted black ironwork fireplace tools and mock-candle sconces holding tiny, dim, flame-shaped light bulbs; all those things were embedded in, and had somehow failed to darken, his makeup. Bev's face, as he quickly checked it now, reinforced his pleasure. Her eyes were twinkling at the sights in the room—never mind that the look might contain elements of ambiguity: delight, yet at the same time something like disbelief?

He saw that a bar had been set up on the old tea wagon in the corner of the room. "Have a Thanksgiving libation?" he quietly asked Bev.

"You can bet your . . . b-bottom dollar I will," she said. She surprised him by asking for gin and bitters. She usually sipped Dubonnet or Cinzano.

"Did you see that Macy's had a huge toy elephant in their parade?" he heard Miss Rankin say, as he crossed to the tea wagon. The Persian rug he walked over was worn down to the warp in the trafficway from the hall and in front of several chairs.

"I wonder if those gigantic balloons in the parade aren't dangerous," Miss Alderhoff said. "I mean, if it's windy."

"There wasn't a breath of air yesterday," Aunt Beth said, and then she laughed hard, having given a little too much emphasis, Gordon thought, to "yesterday."

Leaning over the bar, looking for the gin, Gordon saw a bottle of amontillado with a little cardboard tag hung around its neck on a slip of ribbon. Looking more closely, he read the words written in his mother's hand on the tag:

BEST SHERRY
DO NOT USE

He would wait and see whether to tell Bev about that. He mixed her drink—he found bitters in a tiny square cruet—and shook up a manhattan for himself.

WITH HIS ARRIVAL IN HIS MOTHER'S HOUSE he felt it proper that he should take over from Peter, two years his junior, the duties of a host, and when he had given Beverly her drink, he turned and said, "Anyone else? Mr. Cannahan?"

"Oh, *no*, thank you," Mr. Cannahan said, tearing his eyes away from the tantalizing knot that held Beverly's shawl in place, and rubbing his stomach to remind Gor-

don of the ulcer he had harbored there for so many, many years.

"Of course," Gordon said, remembering. "Forgive me. Beth? Pete? You ready?"

"I can get our own," Peter said.

Gordon sat down. He heard a thunking sound as the Capehart turned a record over. Then the dark Finnish keening resumed.

"And what do you do, Miss Swimmer?" Mr. Cannahan asked.

"Zimmer," Bev said sharply.

"Ah, Miss Zimmer," Mr. Cannahan said. "Lovely name."

"I do . . . n-nothing," Beverly said.

"Best occupation in the world!" Uncle Bert shouted.

Gordon was trying to think of something sensible to say, when his mother came into the room and took a chair. She had removed her apron. "Dear me," she said. "Such confusion. Flo says she'll be ready to serve in five minutes."

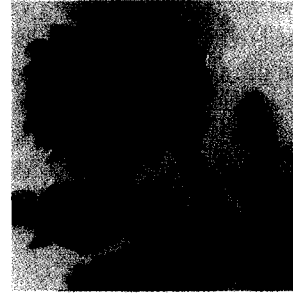
"What nice earrings," Beverly said, to Gordon's delight. She was going to be wonderful.

Gordon's mother put her hands over the amber pendants at her ears. "They hurt," she said. "But do you know? I had a brainstorm. I put Dr. Scholl's corn plasters on the screw pads. Perfect!"

"Perfect" was a word his mother often used, with an ever-so-slight Englishy softening of the *r*. She posted many little signs and notices around the house, like the tag on the sherry bottle, and Gordon thought of the one that used to be stuck beside the shower handle in the guest bathroom: FOR BEST SHOWER BATH, TURN TO TEN O'CLOCK. WAIT 45 SECONDS. PERFECT! But she was far from being a perfectionist; nor, Gordon had long since acknowledged, was she herself perfect. He sometimes thought that she considered one's manner of speaking more important than what one said. A person's emotional tone, a person's feeling toward her, toward the world, was what counted with her. Sometimes she nattered, rattled on without hearing herself. She was kind and warm, though, and always wanted to boost other people's morale. He remembered how, when Daddy was alive, she used to sound off about his being the big man around the place. "The eye of the owner is good for the land," she would say. Her George was "the only man on the island." Yet she had that appetite for quarrels. She often accused her husband, in front of the boys—absurdly, Gordon thought—of letting other women flirt with him. Not of his having flirted himself. She asked friends what was troubling them, really dug out the dirt; she wanted to sympathize, wanted to help, wanted to be loved for being loving. This last craving had sometimes struck Gordon, especially when he had troubles of his own, as a need for something much less adorable than it might seem—a need for some kind of firm grip on your arm. The miracle, though, was her persistent cheerfulness

since Daddy's death. She seemed not to have a trouble in the world. Thinking of her now, Gordon had a sudden vivid and very happy memory of hot chocolate, French bread, honey.

He looked at Bev. She was smiling. She had loved that thing of the earlobe remedy. Her hair was still a mess. It didn't matter. The emotional tone was what mattered.



FLO, THE COOK, APPEARED IN THE ARCHWAY from the hall and shouted, "All right, Mrs. Bronson." Flo was a New England woman; she had her ways.

Brother Peter was the first to stand up. All his life Peter had been hungry. "Come on, folks," he said. "Get your trotters in the trough."

Gordon went over and turned the Capehart off, and then he offered the crook of his arm to his mother. Taking it, she smiled at him and said, "I want you to carve, Son."

Everyone exclaimed at the sight of the table. Glass and silver winked in the afternoon light. Between two newly polished silver candelabra, each bearing five lighted candles of a garish red, stood a display, looking like fireworks bursting in air, of odd varieties of late autumn's greatest pride, the chrysanthemum. Pairs of bottles of red and white wine, and two carafes of sweet cider, stood on silver circlets on a tablecloth with beautiful doilies of Devonshire lace scattered about. At each place, next to a pale-blue napkin folded to stand up, lay one of those crepe-paper tubes for children's parties with tabs to pull from the ends which make a little firecracker sound—each doubtless containing a colored-paper hat and a favor of some kind. Strewn here and there were gravy boats and bowls brimming with all the things that Gordon had known Bev would love: watermelon-rind pickles, tomato marmalade, peach chutney, quince jelly, spiced Jerusalem artichokes, green-tomato mincemeat, and, of course, loads of cranberry sauce.

Gordon's mother seated everyone. Gordon was at the head of the table, she at the other end. She put Peter at her right and Mr. Cannahan at her left. Beverly was between Mr. Cannahan and Uncle Solbert; both men beamed at their luck. The others were scattered around. Gordon had Aunt Beth on his right and Molly on his left.

When they were all seated, Gordon's mother tinkled her wineglass with a knife, and after she had complete

silence, she said, "Peter, dear, would you say grace, please?" This was evenhanded: Gordon would carve, Peter would pray—a special privilege at Thanksgiving dinner.

"God in heaven," Peter said, with his head down and his eyes squeezed tight shut, "we thank you for this wonderful American tradition, we are grateful for prosperity and our mother's good health, we thank you for family values"—Gordon thought he heard awful little Freddie give a tiny grunt at that—"and the heritage of freedom you have granted our nation. And thanks, by the way, for the turkey-lurkey."

During this performance Gordon had not bowed his head; he had watched Beverly. She had not lowered her head either but had stared at Peter with a look that gave Gordon a little twinge of concern. But then she laughed with everyone else at Peter's nonsense at the end, and when Uncle Bert started clapping, she joined in with the rest. Peter, acknowledging the applause, clasped his hands above his head, like the winner of a gold medal.

Flo came in, her face pink, her hair flying every which way, and her apron splashed with gravy, carrying a huge, glistening turkey up at a level with her head, and now everyone both clapped and cheered. She put the bird in front of Gordon and stood there gloating at it.

"What's in the stuffing, Flo?" Uncle Bert asked, when the hubbub died down.

"Well, now, there's chestnuts, and country sausage—that's the thing!—onions, celery, let's see, thyme, sage, bread crumbs, of course, stale bread crumbs. And," she added, with a little lurch in her stance, "perhaps I shouldn't say, folks, but also some Madeira wine!" And she went off to the kitchen, cackling.

Picking up the carving knife, Gordon glanced at Beverly. She was looking at him. Her face was glowing. He stood up, and took some passes, which he hoped looked skillful, with the knife edge at the sharpening rod. He leaned forward to start his work.

While he carved, Flo brought in one dish after another, setting each down with a decisive little bang on a doily on the tablecloth, alongside a serving spoon that was already laid there, and announcing it as she put it in place: mashed potatoes, both white and sweet, in separate casseroles with browned marshmallows on top of the latter; oysters in cornmeal hasty pudding; cut green beans with rosemary; creamed onions; mushrooms braised with sorrel leaves; baked turnips flavored with maple syrup.

WAITING TO BE SERVED, PEOPLE PULLED FAVOR crackers with their neighbors and exclaimed cheerfully at the cheap things they found inside. Mr. Cannahan and Uncle Bert had a brief tiff about who would get to pull Beverly's cracker; Uncle Bert won by sheer force of the bourbon in his veins. He let Beverly pull Mr. Cannahan's cracker,

though. Uncle Bert was the only one at the table to put on a crepe-paper hat. It was bright orange. Everyone was talking at once.

Flo brought in Mr. Cannahan's lunch: two bananas, mashed with a fork into a pulp on a plate. It was all his ulcer was going to allow him to eat. A general cry of commiseration went up, but Mr. Cannahan, looking right at Bev, called out, "I don't mind: it's the company that matters on holidays, isn't it?"

"You're a good sport," Gordon's mother said, patting Mr. Cannahan's hand.

Great confusion occurred while the plates went around and volunteers served things in passing. "Light or dark?" Gordon kept asking various customers. The teenager Caroline couldn't make up her mind. She threw a beseeching glance at her mother, looking as if she might break into tears.

"You like white, honey," Molly said.

"I don't either," Caroline said.

"Suit yourself, kiddo," Molly said. "It's your funeral." Gordon put helpings of both on Caroline's plate, and she flashed him an angry look.

At last things settled down. Gordon could sit. His back hurt a little from leaning over, but he felt important. He saw that Beverly had chosen red wine. People were tucking into their food, and for a while the room was quiet.

Then old Miss Rankin and old Miss Alderhoff started the ball rolling.

"Wasn't it sweet," Miss Rankin said, "that Jackie Kennedy had her baby on Thanksgiving night?"

"I was so offended," Miss Alderhoff said, "that AP fellow trying to take Mrs. Kennedy's picture on the way back from the delivery room. Is there no privacy in this world anymore? I mean to say, the President-elect's wife!"

"Another John Fitzgerald Kennedy, did you see what they're naming him?" Peter said, with his mouth full. "Another Kennedy named for old Honey Fitz, the biggest crook in Boston history. How 'bout that?"

"The poor little thing's in a respirator," Miss Rankin said.

"Really?" said Gordon's mother, who never read the papers. "Why is that?"

"Premature," Miss Rankin said. "Six pounds, three ounces. They say preemies are subject to, you know, breathing problems."

"Well," Miss Alderhoff said, "it wasn't just *that*. They had to take it with a cesarean."

"Another Caesar in the Kennedy family," brother Peter said, in triumph.

Beverly shook her forefinger sideways at Peter. "Doesn't follow," she said, sounding testy. "The operation wasn't named for Caesar. Caesar was given the name that the operation already had, *sectio caesaria*, because he was born that way. That's the story that . . . P-Pliny the Elder tells, anyway."

Peter looked as though he'd been slapped. Gordon suddenly felt breathless, as if he had been jogging a little too fast.

"Actually," Beverly went on good-humoredly, "that doesn't make too much sense, because in those days they used cesareans only to save the baby when the mother died in ch-childbirth, and we know that Caesar's mother lived for more than f-fifty years after he was born. The f-first recorded cesarean on a living woman was in about f-fifteen hundred. It was done by a Swiss . . . p-pig-gelder on his own wife."

The whole table was in silence. Only Uncle Bert, still wearing his orange hat, went on chewing. Gordon got up the courage to look at his mother, and he saw that she was beaming at Beverly. She had a look of amazement and delight on her face. "Mr. Cannahan," she said, "give Beverly a little more wine." Gordon, vibrating with pleasure, saw that the day was going to be a total success after all. The one thing he had been nervous about was Bev's unpredictable spurts of contrariness. He had been afraid of an inadvertent collision of some sort. Bev didn't mean anything by these little bumpy moments; they were for fun, though sometimes others didn't look at them that way. She had a wizard memory, and she knew a great deal (some of what she "knew" wasn't exactly so, but never mind), and it would have been hard to say whether she loved best sparring with brilliant people or straightening out stupid people. A secret of the constant peacefulness between her and Gordon was that she seemed to consider him neither brilliant nor stupid but just comfortably sensible. At this moment he felt a surge in his appetite. He loved Flo's oyster dish.

Miss Rankin piped up. "I wonder if they're going to have the Kennedy family nurse to take care of the baby," she said. "I imagine she took care of Jack himself and all his siblings when they were little. Think of the continuity of it! Miss Hennessy's her name."

"I doubt if they use the 'Miss,'" Miss Alderhoff said. "They'd just call her by her last name. 'Hennessy, would you change the baby's diaper, please?'"

"You better believe no Kennedy would have anything to do with dirty diapers," Peter said with some spirit, looking right at Bev.

But Beverly seemed to have lost interest in Peter. Gordon saw that she had picked up one of the highly polished silver serving spoons that had not been used and was looking at her reflection on the back of it. What a long balloon face she would have in such a mirror! Yet she apparently saw the mess her hair was in, because she began patting it into place. Gordon thought with pleasure. She wants to leave herself in this house—for Bev had a theory that faces printed themselves on mirrors and stayed there forever. She had given herself to one of his mother's spoons.

Peter apparently didn't like Bev's not paying attention to him, and he said, still looking at her, "He's not Presi-

dent yet, thank God. I should have put that in my prayer."

Gordon rose to this. "A little more time for your fatuous Ike to play golf—right? Or like this week, taking care of shop on a quail shoot on some guy's Georgia estate?"

"Now, boys," Mrs. Bronson said, "act your age. How many times have we seen this, Amos?" she said, smiling at Mr. Cannahan. "Every time these two grown men come home and sit down at the table, they need only half an hour to slip back and be ten and eight years old. Isn't that so?"

Mr. Cannahan obviously wanted to agree with his old friend the hostess, but you could also see that he didn't want to offend Gordon and Peter—not at their mother's table—and especially not the lovely young thing on his left, around whom these family breezes seemed in some mysterious way to be swirling. He held his tongue.

Miss Alderhoff, in tune with all pains and sorrows both at this table and elsewhere, said, "Mr. Eisenhower shouldn't have gone out shooting in the rain, poor man. He has bursitis, you know."

Gordon could see his mother sagging somewhat in her chair. This, he knew, meant that she was groping with her foot under the table for the bulge of the bell button down there under the rug. Then she must have found it; he heard the buzzer in the kitchen, and Flo burst in. "We'll need another bottle of red wine up here, Flo," his mother said. "How's the supply down at that end, Beth?"

"We could use another bottle," Aunt Beth said.

"White or red, Beth?"

"It's all the same to *me*," Aunt Beth said. She laughed her tinkling laugh.

"I think red here, too, Mother," Gordon said.

"Two red," Flo said, giving the swinging door a little whack with the flat of her hand as she left the room.

"You were playing Sibelius before," Beverly said to Gordon's mother. "Do you specially like his music?"

"Oh, yes. Do you know 'The Swan of Tuonela?'"

"Then you must also like Brahms," Beverly said. "And probably Rachmaninoff. I was th-thinking, why is it that really good pianists and conductors seem to live forever? When I was a little girl, my mother took me to hear Rachmaninoff. He was an old, old man, playing two of his concertos with the Philharmonic. Two concertos in one evening. I think I fell asleep, but I've never forgotten—that old man's f-frightening . . . p-power."

"Ah, Beverly," Gordon's mother said, her face winy and soft, "I can't wait to be really old. That regime! You wake up at five-thirty or so, and they give you a cup of hot milk. You snooze a bit until breakfast. Then you sit for a while under the dogwood tree and doze off. Later you walk over to look at the strawberries, and then you go back to your chair, and they bring you some hot consommé but you're bored with consommé, so you don't take it, you just sit there: the spots of sun filtering through the tiny white saucers of the dogwood blossoms are so daz-

zling. Good heavens, you must have dropped off, it's lunchtime! After lunch you lie down on the sofa with a knitted throw over you. Then you get up and play some solitaire. A bath. A highball. Supper. You fall asleep listening to the radio, only that's not your night sleep—you'll need a toddy to ensure your night sleep. And then they put you to bed, and they actually tuck you in like a child. Think of it!"



GORDON FELT A RUSH OF GRATITUDE. BEVERLY was so fine. Her face, like his mother's, was rosy and melted and a tiny bit swollen by the warmed blood of friendliness. Her scarf had slid down off to the left, and he stared at the curve of her bare pink neck down onto her pale bare shoulder. Suddenly, putting his fork down, he was overcome by a wish that he could get up and go around there and take Bev by the hand, and lead her upstairs to his old room, and receive her in his boyhood bed, and celebrate with her what there was to be most thankful for on this earth.

But Miss Rankin, who was perhaps not looking forward quite so eagerly as Gordon's mother to being "really old," broke his spell. She said in a cranky voice, "Did anyone see David Susskind interviewing Khrushchev in New York the other night?"

"Sure did," Uncle Solbert said, his orange hat askew. "He gave the old bugger what for, didn't he?"

"Did you notice," Miss Alderhoff said, "that Khrushchev drank mineral water instead of coffee during the program? He must have indigestion."

Little Freddie spoke up for the first time. "Susskind sucks," he said.

"I hope the big K does have a bad stomach," Peter said, speaking again straight to Bev. "Goddamn peasant."

"That's just it, Peter!" Beverly said. "Every clever Russian wants you to *think* he's a peasant. Did you ever read Gorky's reminiscence of. . . T-Tolstoy?" Gordon smiled at the thought of Peter reading even the morning paper. "Gorky read a story of his out loud to Tolstoy, and Tolstoy said he'd got his p-peasants all wrong. The old man said a Russian peasant will come up to you and talk in a silly and incoherent way. He does this on. . . p-purpose, so you'll think he's. . . st-stupid. He knows that people are open and direct with stupid people, and that's just what he wants, because you blurt out everything,

you show all your c-cards, and right away he knows your. . . w-weaknesses."

"I think Beverly has a point there, Peter," Gordon's mother said, tapping Peter on the shoulder.

Peter colored violently. He started to say something, but Beverly had turned to Mr. Cannahan, who had finished his mashed bananas, and she was saying, "I like people with weak stomachs. It means that they. . . th-think about things. Maybe they think too m-much sometimes. But at least they think." As she said that last sentence, she swerved her gaze back toward Peter.

Gordon saw that his mother was charmed by Beverly's kindness to Mr. Cannahan, and Mr. Cannahan looked as if he might faint from pleasure. But Peter was still very red, and as he chewed, his lower jaw seemed to push out like a bulldozer blade. Gordon knew he must break in somehow, to change the drift of things.

He urgently pinged the back of his knife against his wineglass and then raised the glass and said, "Here's to the two women I love most in this world."

HE KNEW ON THE INSTANT THAT HE HAD MADE a terrible mistake. He saw his mother, faced with the appalling idea of equivalence, suddenly looking at him as if she had no idea who he was. Bev, stricken pale, reached for her wineglass, presumably to raise it to his mother—or perhaps, Gordon thought in sudden panic, to throw it down the whole length of the table at him—but instead she clumsily knocked it over, and a flood of red, like blood, soaked into one of the priceless lace doilies.

A dead silence followed, a pause in which a creaking of dry timbers could be heard, as if the whole house around them were heaving a deep sigh. Then came such a rush of exclamations that Gordon had the sensation of watching speeded-up film footage.

Peter cried out, "Ha!"

"Salt! Salt!" Aunt Beth shouted. "Put a lot of salt on it. I tell you, it's the only way to prevent a stain."

Beverly said, all too distinctly, "Sh-shit!" and then quickly added, "I'm s-so s-sorry, Mrs. Bronson."

"Jesus Christ!" Peter said.

Uncle Solbert, absurd in his orange paper hat, said in a shocked voice, "Peter!"

Gordon's mother said to Peter, "Watch your tongue, Son. Have you forgotten what day this is?"—as if she herself had forgotten what day it actually was.

Old Miss Alderhoff pushed her chair back and stood up. "Well!" she said, "I am going to get a box of salt," and she marched around the table to the kitchen door.

Peter's wife, Molly, at Gordon's left, chose this moment to shout, "Mother Bronson, you've *always* favored Gordon over Petie. *Always*. You're not fair!"

Gordon's mother snapped out, "You stay out of this, Molly."

Little Caroline stood up, knocked her chair over backwards, and ran sobbing into the living room. Awful Freddie's eyes popped out with his first signs of pleasure all day. Miss Alderhoff appeared, with Flo right behind her holding high a blue cylindrical box as if it were the Statue of Liberty's torch, and they strode around the table in tandem. "Where is it? Where is it?" Flo asked. Uncle Solbert pointed; Flo leaned over his shoulder and poured a heap of salt on Beverly Zimmer's taint.

Gordon's first thought, scanning his mother's face for what might happen next, was that she suddenly looked a hundred. She had apparently gotten, all at once, her wish to be "really old." The caverns under her eyes had gone dark, her cheeks were bloodless, and the left side of her mouth sagged as if she'd had a stroke. He thought, Oh, God, I've ruined her Thanksgiving. And then, suddenly, with a forkful of maple-flavored turnip on his tongue, and with his eyes abruptly peeled to truths for which he could find no way to give thanks, he saw the appalling emptiness, the bleakness, of his mother's life. Here she sat in a dark house with her best friends: two gossipy old maids and a man whose stomach burned year after year with the acidity of his enigmatic needs—three companions of her days and nights in empty prattle during endless bridge games. On top of that, she'd had to cope with her alcoholic brother Solbert and alcoholic sister-in-law Beth, who lived nearby. And then her raging son Peter; and his Molly, with a voice like the one you heard as a child on a tin-can telephone with a string stretched to the speaker's can; and their rotten children, her only grandchildren, affording her, too sadly, a hollow pride in her legacy. And what of the other son, at present swallowing turnip—what of him?

Gordon's mother turned to Beverly and asked in a kindly voice, "What do you like about my son?"

Gordon wondered what sort of trap his mother was setting.

"G-Gordon? Gordon?" Beverly asked twice, perhaps to stall for time. "What I like about G-Gordon is that he doesn't . . . sm-smoke cigars."

Mrs. Bronson laughed. "Good for you!" she said with generous admiration, as if Beverly had managed to drive a passing shot over the net that was stretched between them. "Do you have any idea why he likes you?"

It was Beverly's turn to laugh. "He likes my being . . . di-di-di-disorderly. In my . . . th-thinking. You see, your son is very neat—very careful which dr-drawers he p-puts things in."

Gordon saw that the color was coming back into his mother's face. By God, she was a strong one, she had recovered, she was enjoying herself. He was tempted to ask his mother what in Beverly *she* was beginning to like, but he was afraid to.

"How 'bout *your* drawers?" Peter said to Beverly. "Is he, like you say, c-careful?"

Little Freddie snickered.

"Shut *up*, Peter!" Uncle Solbert shouted.

"My heavens," Mr. Cannahan said.

"Molly," Gordon's mother said, projecting a hushed voice the length of the table, "sometimes your husband can be very annoying. But I'm sure you know that of your own knowledge." She turned back to Beverly and said, "Tell me more about my Gordon."

"Well," Bev said, "he's sort of muh-muh . . . m-my Gordon right now."

"Ah," Mrs. Bronson said. "You stake a claim. Do you believe his intentions are honorable, as they used to say?"

"Better ask him," Beverly said, without a trace of a stammer.

"Gordon," his mother said, "serve some more turkey to whoever wants it, please."

Gordon felt a stab of anger. Having said that he and Peter reverted to being eight and ten years old at her table, his mother was now, for her purposes, treating him like a child. Staking *her* claim, he guessed. Careful to control his voice, he said, "Beverly and I are going to be married."

Uncle Solbert tore his paper hat off and waved it in circles over his head and shouted, "Hurrah!"

"Congratulations," Mr. Cannahan said to Beverly, looking heartbroken.

"My God," Peter said.

"And you chose to tell me this at Thanksgiving dinner?" Gordon's mother said.

"I thought you'd be happy for me, Mother."

"Oh, but I am," she said, her voice trembling. "You have picked a winner. You've shown very good sense, Son." She turned to Beverly and said, her eyes brimming, "I have liked you, Miss Zimmer, from the moment you walked in the front door. My Gordon, if you will permit me to call him that once more, is a very lucky boy."

After a long pause Beverly said, "Your p-peach ch-chutney is the b-best I ever tasted."

"Thank you, my dear." Gordon saw his mother's face relax into an awkward smile of surrender, and he felt a rush of contrition and pity. She was amazing. She had caught her balance. "Marriage," she was saying to Bev, "isn't an easy estate. You'd better have a little chat with Molly down there about it. I was lucky myself, but it wasn't easy, you know. My husband was an indecisive man, and—"

But Miss Alderhoff had raised her glass, and was calling out in a shrill voice, "Let's drink to the engagement. To Gordon and Miss Zimmer!"

"Yes! Yes!" Miss Rankin cried. "To the engagement!"

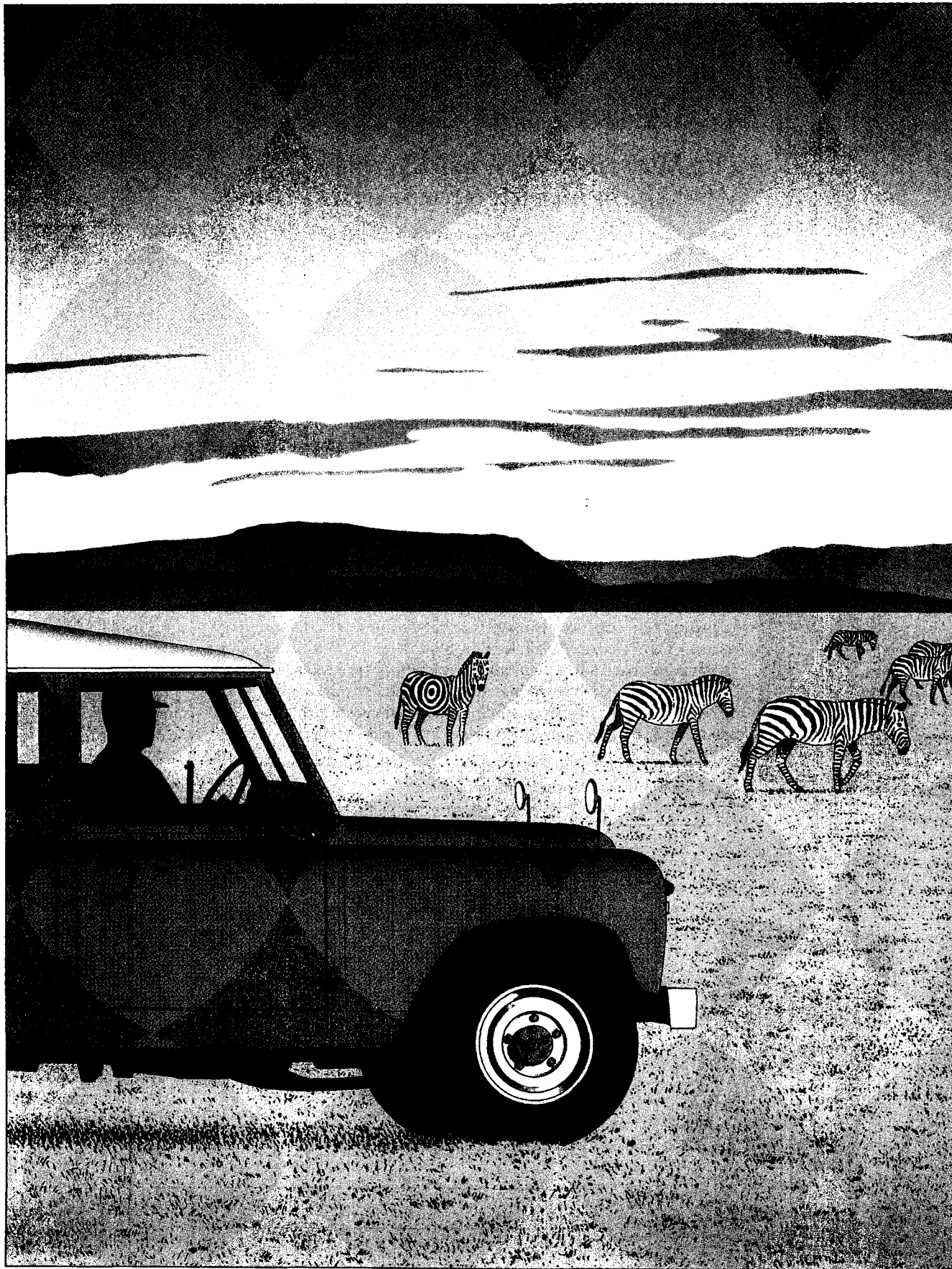
Uncle Solbert and Aunt Beth both cheered, but others at the table were quiet as they lifted their glasses and drank. Peter hesitated.

"Drink up, darling," Gordon's mother, seeming to be completely herself again, said to Peter. She caressed his arm. "Wish your brother luck, darling."

"Here's mud in your eye," Peter said to Gordon, before he gulped at his glass. He did not look at Beverly. □

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BY GUY BILLOUT



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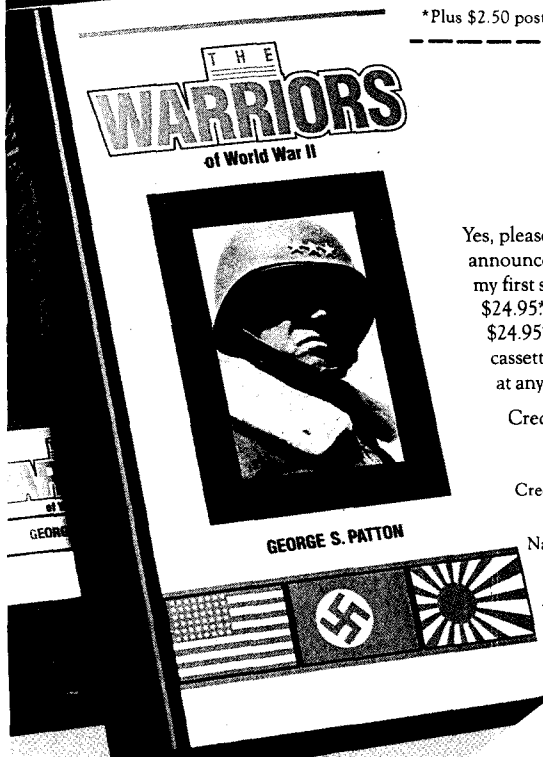
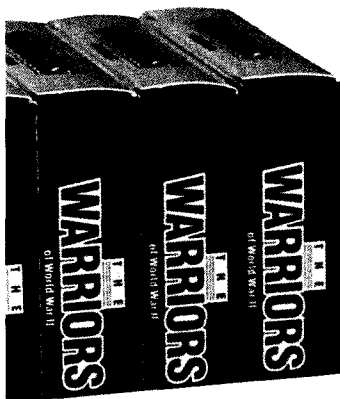
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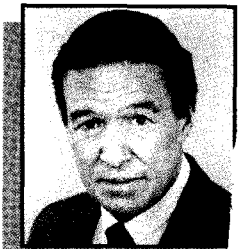
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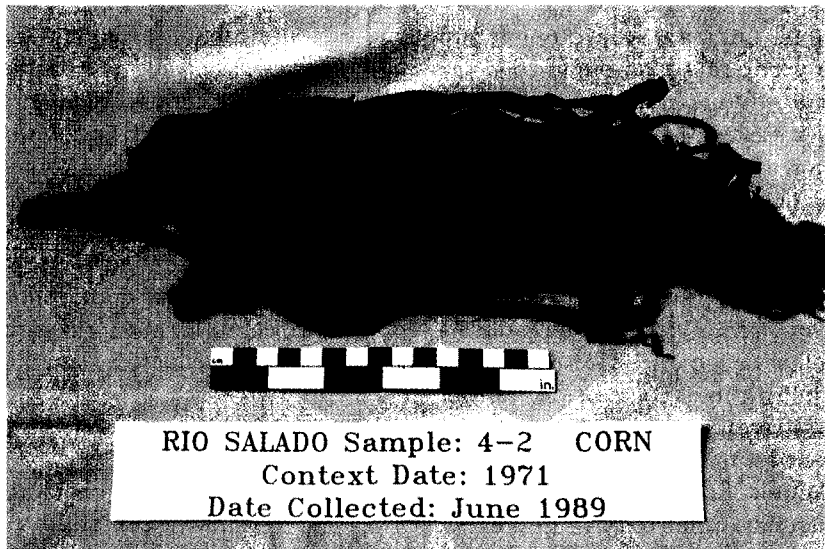
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An archaeologist who excavates landfills believes that our thinking about garbage has been distorted by powerful myths—for example, that we're producing more of it per person than ever, that plastic is a big problem, and that paper biodegrades rapidly in landfills

RUBBISH!

BY WILLIAM L. RATHJE



NEWSPAPERS. TELEPHONE BOOKS. SOILED DIAPERS. MEDICINE VIALS ENCASING brightly colored pills. Brittle ossuaries of chicken bones and T-bones. Sticky green mountains of yard waste. Half-empty cans of paint and turpentine and motor oil and herbicide. Broken furniture and forsaken toys. Americans produce a lot of garbage, some of it very toxic, and our garbage is not always disposed of in a sensible way. The press in recent years has paid much

attention to the filling up (and therefore the closing down) of landfills, to the potential dangers of incinerators, and to the apparent inadequacy of our recycling efforts. The use of the word "crisis" in these contexts has become routine. For all the publicity, however, the precise state of affairs is not known. It may be that the lack of reliable information and the persistence of misinformation constitute the real garbage crisis.

But we have learned some things over the years. My program at the University of Arizona, The Garbage Project, has been looking at landfills and at garbage fresh out of the can since the early 1970s, and it has generated important insights. During the past two years I have visited all parts of the country and spoken with people who think about garbage every day—town planners, politi-

cians, junkyard owners, landfill operators, civil engineers, microbiologists, and captains of industry—as well as many ordinary men and women who help make garbage possible. When seen in perspective, our garbage woes turn out to be serious—indeed, they have been serious for more than a century—but they are not exceptional, and they can be dealt with by disposal methods that are safe and already available. The biggest challenge we will face is to recognize that the conventional wisdom about garbage is often wrong.

To get some perspective on garbage let's review a few fundamentals. For most of the past two and a half million years human beings left their garbage where it fell. Oh, they sometimes tidied up their sleeping and activity areas, but that was about all. This disposal scheme func-

tioned adequately, because hunters and gatherers frequently abandoned their campgrounds to follow game or find new stands of plants. Man faced his first garbage crisis when he became a sedentary animal—when, rather than move himself, he chose to move his garbage. The archaeologist Gordon R. Willey has argued, only partly in fun, that *Homo sapiens* may have been propelled along the path toward civilization by his need for a class at the bottom of the social hierarchy that could be assigned the task of dealing with mounting piles of garbage.

This brings us to an important truth about garbage: There are no ways of dealing with it that haven't been known for many thousands of years. These ways are essentially four: dumping it, burning it, converting it into something that can be used again, and minimizing the volume of material goods—future garbage—that is produced in the first place (“source reduction,” as it is called). Every civilization of any complexity has used all four methods to varying degrees.

From prehistory through the present day dumping has been the means of disposal favored everywhere, including in the cities. The archaeologist C. W. Blegen, who dug into Bronze Age Troy in the 1950s, found that floors had become so littered that periodically a fresh supply of dirt or clay had been brought in to cover up the refuse. Of course, after several layers had been applied, the doors and roofs had to be adjusted upward. Over time the ancient cities of the Middle East rose high above the landscape on massive mounds, called tells. In 1973 a civil engineer with the Department of Commerce, Charles Gunnerson, calculated that the rate of uplift owing to the accumulation of debris in Bronze Age Troy was about 4.7 feet per century. If the idea of a city rising above its garbage at this rate seems extraordinary, it may be worth considering that “street level” on the island of Manhattan is fully six feet higher today than it was when Peter Minuit lived there.

At Troy and elsewhere, of course, not all trash was kept indoors. The larger pieces of garbage and debris were thrown into the streets. There semi-domesticated animals (usually pigs) ate up the food scraps, while human scavengers, in exchange for the right to sell anything useful that they might find, carried much of what was left to vacant lots or to the outskirts of town, where the garbage was burned or simply left.

In most of the Third World a slopping-and-scavenging system that Hector and Aeneas would recognize remains in place. The image of sulfurous “garbage mountains” in the Third World may be repellent, but the people who work these dumps, herding their pigs even as they sort out paper and plastic and metal, are performing the most thorough job of garbage recycling and resource recovery in the world. The garbage mountains point up another important (and often overlooked) truth about garbage: efficient disposal is not always completely compatible with other desirable social ends, such as human dignity

and economic modernization. In a liberal democracy these other ends compete for priority, and more often than not win.

Dumping, slopping, and scavenging were the norm in Europe and the United States until the late 1800s. It is difficult for anyone alive now to comprehend how appalling, as recently as a century ago, were the conditions of daily life in all the cities of the Western world, even in the wealthiest parts of town. The stupefying level of filth accepted as normal from the Middle Ages through the Enlightenment was augmented horribly by the Industrial Revolution. As the historian Martin Melosi has noted in his book *Garbage in the Cities* (1981), one of the ironies of laissez-faire capitalism is that it gave rise to a kind of “municipal socialism,” as cities were forced, for the first time since antiquity, to shoulder responsibility for such duties as public safety and sanitation. Taking the long view reminds us of one more often-overlooked truth about garbage: Ever since governments began facing up to their responsibilities, the story of the garbage problem in the West has been one of steady amelioration, of bad giving way to less bad and eventually to not too bad. To be able to complain about the garbage problems that persist is, by past standards, something of a luxury.

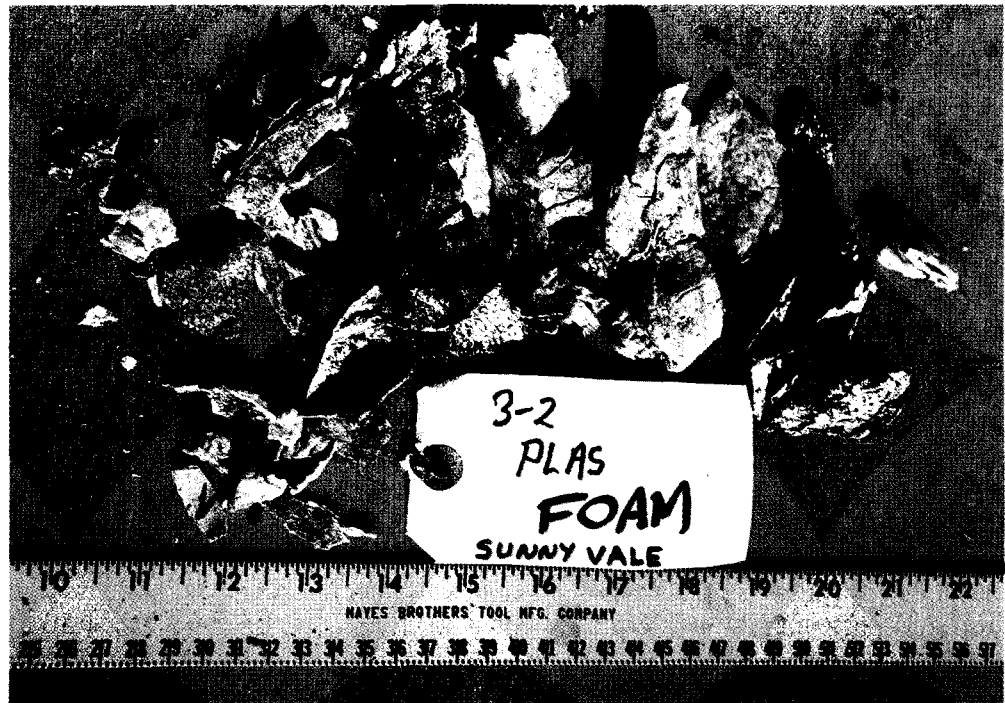
An Unknown Quantity

WHAT MOST PEOPLE CALL GARBAGE, PROFESSIONALS call solid waste. The waste that we're most familiar with, from the households and institutions and small businesses of towns and cities, is “municipal solid waste,” or MSW. Professionals talk about what we all throw away as entering the “solid-waste stream,” and the figure of speech is apt. Waste flows unceasingly, fed by hundreds of millions of tributaries. While many normal activities come to a halt on weekends and holidays, the production of garbage flows on. Indeed, days of rest tend to create the largest waves of garbage. Christmas is a solid-waste tsunami.

One might think that something for which professionals have a technical term of long standing should also be precisely calibrated in terms of volume. As we shall see, this is not the case with MSW. Nonetheless, there has been a good deal of vivid imagery relating to volume. Katie Kelly, in her book *Garbage* (1973), asserted that the amount of MSW produced in the United States annually would fill five million trucks; these, “placed end to end, would stretch around the world twice.” In December of 1987 *Newsday* estimated that a year's worth of America's solid waste would fill the twin towers of 187 World Trade Centers. In 1985 *The Baltimore Sun* claimed that Baltimore generates enough garbage every day to fill Memorial Stadium to a depth of nine feet—a ballpark figure if ever there was one.

Calculating the total annual volume or weight of gar-

FOAM PACKAGING FROM A LANDFILL IN SUNNYVALE, CALIFORNIA. THE TARGET OF MANY PROPOSED BANS NATIONWIDE, FOAM ACCOUNTS FOR ONLY A THIRD OF ONE PERCENT OF LANDFILL VOLUME. IF IT WERE BANNED, IT WOULD SIMPLY BE REPLACED BY SOMETHING ELSE.



bage in the United States is difficult because there is, of course, no way one can actually measure or weigh more than a fraction of what is thrown out. All studies have had to take shortcuts. Not surprisingly, estimates of the size of the U.S. solid-waste stream are quite diverse. Figures are most commonly expressed in pounds discarded per person per day, and the studies that I have seen from the past decade and a half give the following rates: 2.9 pounds per person per day, 3.02 pounds, 4.24, 4.28, 5.0, and 8.0. My own view is that the higher estimates significantly overstate the problem. Garbage Project studies of actual refuse reveal that even three pounds of garbage per person per day may be too high an estimate for many parts of the country, a conclusion that has been corroborated by weight-sorts in many communities. Americans are wasteful, but to some degree we have been conditioned to think of ourselves as more wasteful than we truly are—and certainly as more wasteful than we used to be.

Evidence all around us reinforces such perceptions. Fast-food packaging is ubiquitous and conspicuous. Planned obsolescence is a cliché. Our society is filled with symbolic reminders of waste. What we forget is everything that is no longer there to see. We do not see the 1,200 pounds per year of coal ash that every American generated at home at the turn of the century and that was usually dumped on the poor side of town. We do not see the hundreds of thousands of dead horses that once had to be disposed of by American cities every year. We do not look behind modern packaging and see the food waste that it has prevented, or the garbage that it has saved us from making. (Consider the difference in terms of garbage generation between making orange juice from

concentrate and orange juice from scratch; and consider the fact that producers of orange-juice concentrate sell the leftover orange rinds as feed, while households don't.) The average household in Mexico City produces one third more garbage a day than does the average American household. The reason for the relatively favorable U.S. showing is packaging—which is to say, modernity. No, Americans are not suddenly producing more garbage. Per capita our record is, at *worst*, one of relative stability.

What's in a Landfill?

A SANITARY LANDFILL IS TYPICALLY A DEPRESSION lined with clays, in which each day's deposit of fresh garbage is covered with a layer of dirt or plastic or both. A great deal of mythology has built up around the modern landfill. We have stuffed it with the contents of our imaginations. It is a fact, however, that there is an acute shortage of sanitary landfills for the time being, especially in the northeastern United States. From 1982 to 1987 some 3,000 landfills have been filled up and shut down nationwide. The customary formulation of the problem we face (you will find it in virtually every newspaper or magazine article on the subject) is that 50 percent of the landfills now in use will close down within five years. As it happens, that has always been true—it was true in 1970 and in 1960—because most landfills are designed to be in use for only about ten years. As noted, we are not producing more household garbage per capita (though we are probably producing more garbage overall, there being more and more of us). The problem is that old landfills are not being replaced.

Texas, for example, awarded some 250 permits a year for landfills in the mid-seventies but awarded fewer than fifty last year.

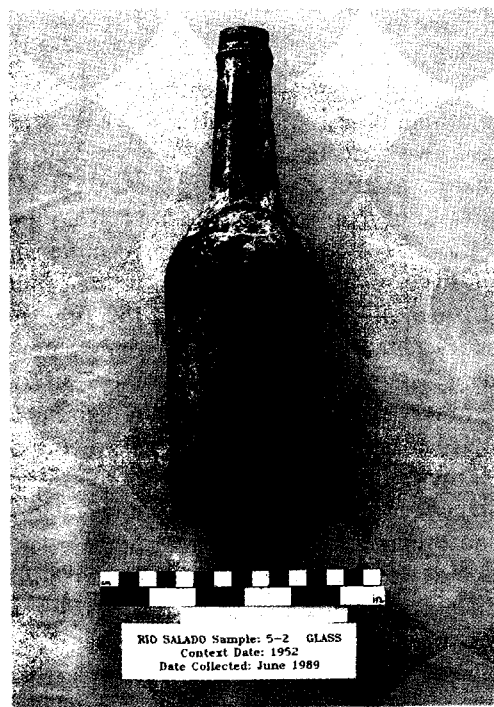
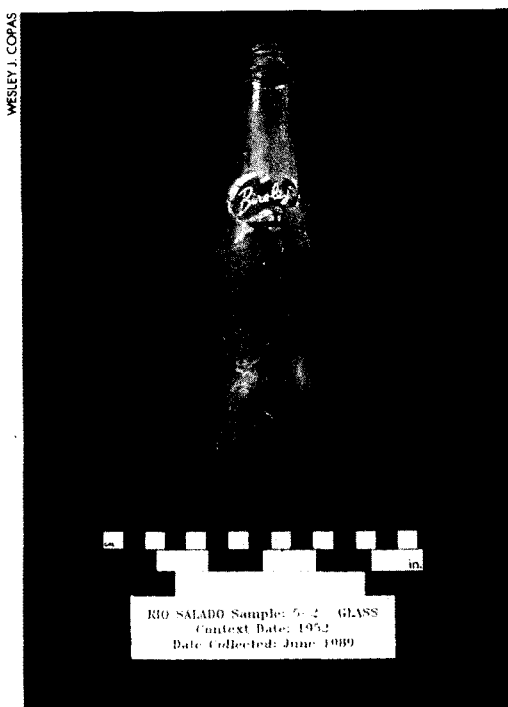
The idea persists nevertheless that we are filling up landfills at an exponential rate, and that certain products with a high public profile are disproportionately responsible. I recently ran across articles in two different newspapers from Oregon in which the finger of blame was pointed at disposable diapers; one of them claimed that disposable diapers accounted for a quarter of the contents of local landfills and the other put the figure at "five percent to thirty-two percent." A recent editorial in *The New York Times* singled out fast-food packaging for straining the capacity of the nation's landfills. Fast-food packaging is, perhaps not surprisingly, almost everyone's villain of choice. I have over the years asked many people who have never seen the inside of a landfill to estimate what percentage of the contents consists of fast-food packaging, and the answers I have gotten have ranged from five to 35 percent, with most estimates either 20 or 30 percent.

The physical reality inside a landfill is considerably different from what you might suppose. I spent some time with The Garbage Project's team over the past two years digging into seven landfills: two outside Chicago, two in the San Francisco Bay area, two in Tucson, and one in Phoenix. We exhumed 16,000 pounds of garbage, weighing every item we found and sorting them all into twenty-seven basic categories and then into 162 sub-groupings. In those eight tons of garbage and dirt cover there were fewer than sixteen pounds of fast-food packaging; in other words, only about a tenth of one percent of the landfills' contents by weight consisted of fast-food

packaging. Less than one percent of the contents by weight was disposable diapers. The entire category of things made from plastic accounted for less than five percent of the landfills' contents by weight, and for only 12 percent by volume. The real culprit in every landfill is plain old paper—non-fast-food paper, and mostly paper that isn't for packaging. Paper accounts for 40 to 50 percent of everything we throw away, both by weight and by volume.

If fast-food packaging is the Emperor's New Clothes of garbage, then a number of categories of paper goods collectively deserve the role of Invisible Man. In all the hand-wringing over the garbage crisis, has a single voice been raised against the proliferation of telephone books? Each two-volume set of Yellow Pages distributed in Phoenix last year—to be thrown out this year—weighed 8.63 pounds, for a total of 6,000 tons of wastepaper. And competitors of the Yellow Pages have appeared virtually everywhere. Dig a trench through a landfill and you will see layers of phone books, like geological strata, or layers of cake. Just as conspicuous as telephone books are newspapers, which make up 10 to 18 percent of the contents of a typical municipal landfill by volume. Even after several years of burial they are usually well preserved. During a recent landfill dig in Phoenix, I found newspapers dating back to 1952 that looked so fresh you might read one over breakfast. Deep within landfills, copies of that *New York Times* editorial about fast-food containers will remain legible until well into the next century.

As the foregoing suggests, the notion that much biodegradation occurs inside lined landfills is largely a popular myth. Making discards out of theoretically biodegradable



GLASS BOTTLES, LIKE THESE FROM THE TRUMAN ERA, RECOVERED AT PHOENIX'S RIO SALADO LANDFILL, ARE NOT AS PLENTIFUL AS THEY ONCE WERE IN GARBAGE. FEWER ARE BEING MADE AND MORE ARE BEING RECYCLED.

materials, such as paper, or plastic made with cornstarch, is often proposed as a solution to our garbage woes (as things biodegrade, the theory goes, there will be more room for additional refuse). Laboratories can indeed biodegrade newspapers into gray slime in a few weeks or months, if the newspapers are finely ground and placed in ideal conditions. The difficulty, of course, is that newspapers in landfills are not ground up, conditions are far from ideal, and biodegradation does not follow laboratory schedules. Some food and yard debris does degrade, but at a very, very slow rate (by 25 to 50 percent over ten to fifteen years). The remainder of the refuse in landfills seems to retain its original weight, volume, and form. It is, in effect, mummified. This may be a blessing, because if paper did degrade rapidly, the result would be an enormous amount of inks and paint that could leach into groundwater.

The fact that plastic does not biodegrade, which is often cited as one of its great defects, may actually be one of its great virtues. Much of plastic's bad reputation is undeserved. Because plastic bottles take up so much room in our kitchen trash cans, we infer that they take up a lot of room in landfills. In fact by the time garbage has been compressed in garbage trucks (which exert a pressure of up to fifty pounds per square inch on their loads) and buried for a year or two under tons of refuse, anything plastic has been squashed flat. In terms of landfill volume, plastic's share has remained unchanged since 1970. And plastic, being inert, doesn't introduce toxic chemicals into the environment.

A new kind of plastic that is biodegradable may in fact represent a step backward. The definition of "biodegradable" plastic used by most manufacturers focuses on tensile strength. Plastics "totally" degrade when their tensile strength is reduced by 50 percent. At that point—after as long as twenty years—a biodegradable plastic item will have degenerated into many little plastic pieces, but the total volume of plastic will not have changed at all. The degeneration agent used in biodegradable plastic, usually mostly cornstarch, makes up no more than 6 percent of a biodegradable plastic item's total volume; the 94 percent that's left represents more plastic than would be contained in the same item made with nonbiodegradable plastic, because items made with biodegradable plastic have to be thicker to compensate for the weakening effect of the degenerating agent.

THE POTENTIALLY TOXIC LEGACY OF LANDFILLS that may long ago have been covered over by hospitals and golf courses illustrates one of the terrible ironies of enlightened garbage management: an idea that seems sensible and right is often overtaken by changes in society and in the contents of its garbage. The idea of the sanitary landfill was advanced by civil engineers who lived in a simpler age. Industries used very

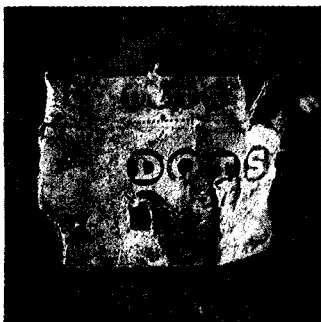
toxic chemicals, yes, but most households lacked the array of pesticides, cleansers, and automotive fluids that one can find today in virtually every American home. Moreover, the landfill movement that matured after the Second World War, though hardly messianic, was led by people who had a vision. They believed that in the disposal of garbage two birds could almost always be killed instead of one.

This is a historically peculiar trait of garbage science in the United States. The safe and efficient disposal of garbage has never been deemed a high enough end in itself by the professionals here. The goal has always been to get rid of garbage and do something else—create energy, make fertilizer, retrieve precious metals. In the case of sanitary landfills, their proponents hoped not only to dispose of mountains of garbage but also to reclaim thousands of acres of otherwise "waste" land and, literally, to give something back to America. The ideal places for landfills, they argued, were the very places that most scientists now believe to be the worst places to put garbage: along rivers or in wetlands. It is in unlined landfills in places like these that, not surprisingly, the problem of chemical "leachates" has been shown to be a matter of grave concern.

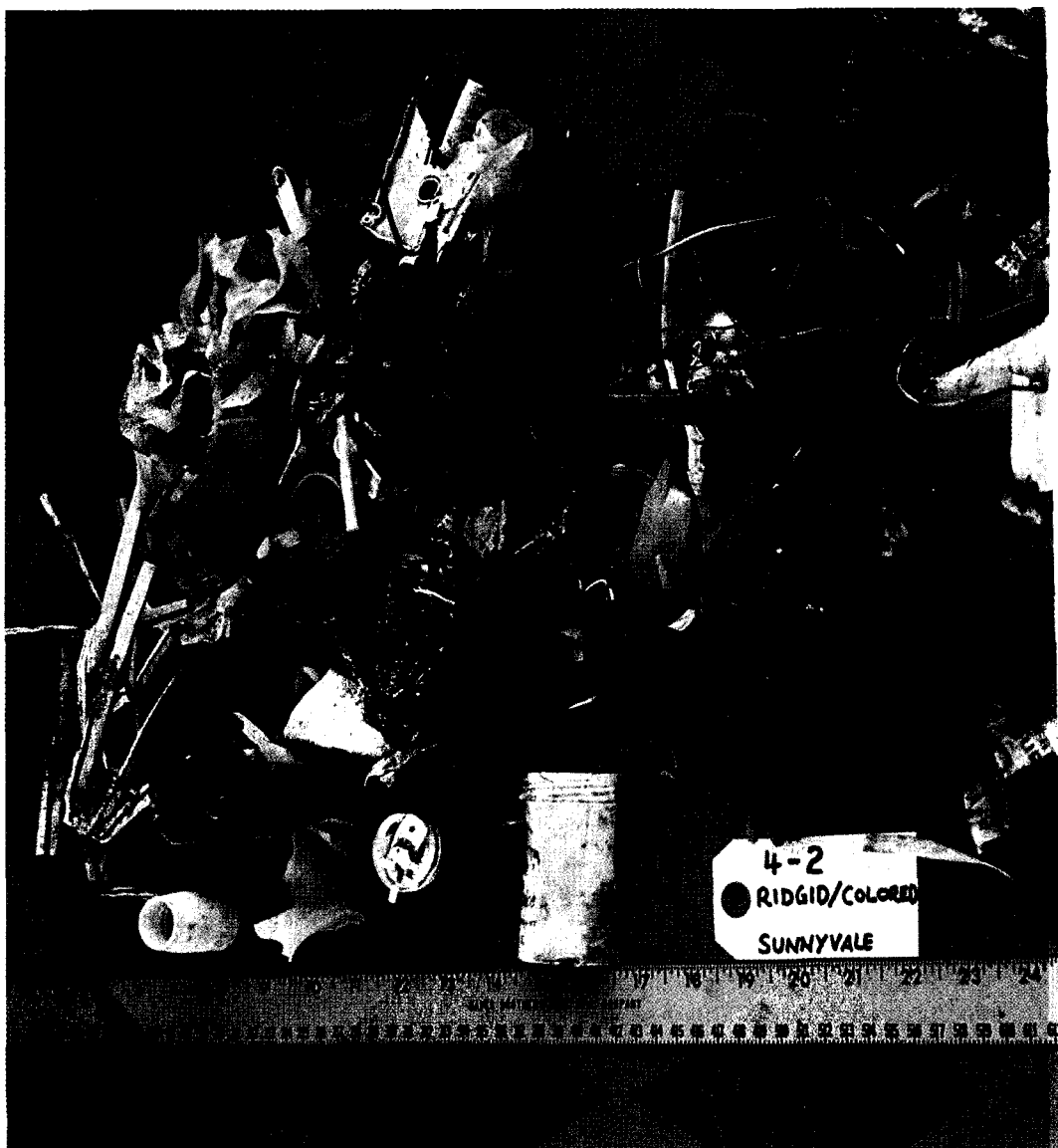
Environmental scientists believe that they now know enough to design and locate safe landfills, even if those landfills must hold a considerable amount of hazardous household waste such as motor oil and pesticides. The State of Delaware seems to be successful at siting such landfills now. But places like Long Island, where the water table is high, should never have another landfill. In the congested northeastern states there may simply be no room for many more landfills, at least not safe ones. Some 1,550 twenty-ton tractor trailers laden with garbage now leave Long Island every week bound for landfills elsewhere. But the country at large still has room aplenty. The State of New York recently commissioned an environmental survey of 42 percent of its domain with the express aim of determining where landfills might be properly located. The survey pinpointed lands that constitute only one percent of the area but nevertheless total 200 square miles.

The obstacles to the sanitary landfill these days are monetary—transporting garbage a few hundred miles by truck may cost more than shipping the same amount to Taiwan—and, perhaps more important, psychological: no one wants a garbage dump in his back yard. But they are not insuperable, and they are not fundamentally geographic. Quite frankly, few nations have the enormous (and enormously safe) landfill capabilities that this one has. Iraj Zandi, an environmental scientist who teaches at the University of Pennsylvania, said to me recently during a discussion about landfills, "Have you ever taken a flight from San Diego to Philadelphia? For three thousand miles you look down out of the plane and there's nothing there!"

WESLEY J. CORAS



A CANDY BOX (ABOVE) AND A CACHE OF ASSORTED PLASTIC FROM THE SUNNYVALE LANDFILL. PLASTIC IS DIFFICULT TO RECYCLE, BECAUSE OF ITS IMMENSE VARIETY IN COMPOSITION, BUT IT DOESN'T TAKE UP MUCH SPACE IN LANDFILLS AND, WHEN BURIED, IS STABLE AND UNLIKELY TO RELEASE TOXIC CHEMICALS INTO THE ENVIRONMENT.



The Technological Fix

AMERICANS HAVE NEVER BEEN CONTENT TO DO things the old-fashioned way, and when garbage has been involved, they have always been receptive to any new, state-of-the-art means of disposal—especially if it promises savings in money or, better, a tidy profit. The very first technological fixes in this country were a technique known as reduction, which heralded the age of recycling, and the incinerator, a device whose popularity has enjoyed enormous ups and suffered enormous downs.

In reduction, which was imported from Europe but never widely adopted there, wet garbage and dead animals were stewed in large vats in order to produce grease and a substance called residuum. The grease was sold for three to ten cents a pound and was used in the manufacture of soap, candles, glycerine, lubricants, and perfume. The residuum brought five to ten cents a ton and was

used for fertilizer. The negative side of this process was that the reduction plants emitted pungent odors and a black, molten runoff that polluted nearby streams. By the 1920s most plants had been deemed impossibly disgusting and shut down, leaving a vacancy that was quickly filled by incinerators.

By 1920 there were incinerators in twelve American cities, including Topeka and Berkeley, and on the eve of the Second World War some 700 incinerators were in operation. Then, rather abruptly, incinerators fell into a period of decline. The advantages of incinerators were plain (they burned garbage up), but so were the disadvantages (they discharged foul odors, noxious gases, and gritty smoke). For aesthetic reasons rather than reasons of health or the environment (this was decades before anyone had heard of “risk factors” or acid rain) municipalities in the 1950s began shutting down their incinerators and focusing on sanitary landfills.

Then came the energy crisis. Amid skyrocketing fuel



DOUGLAS C. WILSON

costs and a fear of resource shortages, incinerators were reinvented and renamed. The idea behind the “resource-recovery” plant was simple: not only would it burn trash to cinders but also it would garner from it any valuable materials and at the same time provide heat and electricity to customers nearby. By 1977 some twenty new resource-recovery plants were in use, another ten were being built, and about thirty-five were on the drawing board.

But resource-recovery plants tried to accomplish too much. A surfeit of variables had to be factored into their operations. For one thing, the machinery was complicated. The plants were dependent for their profitability on sales of recovered materials, but the secondary-materials markets are exceedingly erratic. Overestimates of the waste stream meant that many plants had difficulty just getting enough garbage to operate. Some operators ended up importing garbage from out of state. Today only a few resource-recovery plants remain in operation.

The newest means of incineration, a European import called mass burn, will have more staying power, because it is simple. Garbage is fed into a furnace, where it falls onto moving grates that tumble it at temperatures up to 2400° F. The burning mass heats water, and the steam drives a turbine to generate electricity, which is sold to a utility. To curb pollution, the waste gases are blown into electrostatic precipitators, or acid scrubbers, and then through fabric filters called baghouses. The ash residue is extracted, cooled, and, generally, dumped in a municipal landfill, where it takes up roughly ten percent of the room it would have taken as raw garbage. There are more than a hundred mass-burn incinerators in operation today in the United States, and there may be about 300 by 1995, when perhaps a quarter of America’s garbage will go through their doors.

The main drawback to mass-burn incinerators is that for all their pollution controls, they can release into the atmosphere small amounts of certain metals, acid gases, and also classes of chemicals known as dioxins and furans, which have been implicated in birth defects and several kinds of cancer. No one really knows what the long-term risks are from the emissions released by incinerators. A portion of the ash produced by mass-burn plants is also toxic, containing dangerous levels of lead and cadmium, and some cities have had difficulty finding landfills for this ash. Quite apart from health issues, mass-burn incinerators are hugely expensive—they cost as much as \$400 million apiece—and the task of getting one sited and built attracts the kind of pork-barrel chicanery and eco-bravado that one might expect, with best-case scenarios pitted against worst-case ones. Plants can usually be operated safely—for a time. But plants get old, and performance begins to decline. Nevertheless, incineration is a big piece of the future, and environmentalists—at least mainstream environmentalists—seem more or less resigned to mass-burn plants as the only conceivable alternative to a heavier reliance on landfills, many of which, as noted, are old and unsafely located.

Demand-Side Economics

THE YARDS OF AMERICA’S WASTEPAPER AND scrap-metal dealers are located near interstates and in warehouse districts, and they contain piles of crushed automobiles, railroad cars filled with cans, and baled newspaper and cardboard stacked several stories high. These are the trading pits of the recycled-materials markets. There is a big split between those who would recycle to make money and those who would recycle to do good, and I was made painfully aware of it one night at an Association of Recycling Industries convention, where I was scheduled to speak. Talking to a wastepaper dealer, I described with satisfaction the municipal newspaper-recycling program that the city of Tucson had just begun. The dealer looked at me

in horror. He said, "You're telling me how well the competition is doing—the ones who are subsidized by the taxpayers to take away our livelihood. Don't you understand? There never has been a shortage of recycled newspapers. The shortage is in demand. Markets fill up just like landfills. There are just so many car panels and cereal boxes that need to be made. I suppose you believe GM is going to say, 'Hey, great! Here's a bunch more newspapers for door panels. Let's make some more cars.' The more Tucson recycles, the less I do."

Twelve years later I count wastepaper dealers and other for-profit recyclers among my friends and also among the most valuable resources available to the United States for dealing with garbage. The champions of municipal recycling, who in communities across the country have been trying to move in on bottles, newspapers, and cans in the belief that recyclable commodities represent virgin territory, have found that the territory is already inhabited. Recycling by anyone should be encouraged, in my view, but it is important to understand at the outset what kind of recycling works and what kind may end up doing more harm than good.

Newsprint illustrates one potential problem. Only about ten percent of old newspapers go on to be recycled into new newspapers. What newspapers are really good for is making cereal and other boxes (if it's gray on the inside, it's from recycled stock), the insides of automobiles (the average car contains about sixty pounds of recycled newsprint), wallboard, and insulation. All these end uses are near saturation. Scrap dealers are in the precarious position of being able to obtain enough newsprint to supply demand completely but not daring to sell so much that the price of newsprint plummets and puts them out of business. What happens when the market is suddenly flooded with newsprint? Last year the State of New Jersey implemented new legislation requiring every community to separate at curbside, and collect, three categories of recyclables. As a result, in recent months the price of used newspaper in most parts of New Jersey has plummeted from up to \$40 a ton to -\$25 a ton—in other words, you have to pay to have it taken away. If legislation like this became widespread, without complementary measures to increase demand for recycled-paper products, the effects could be precisely opposite those intended.

The fact is that for the time being, despite the recriminations and breast-beating, we are recycling just about as much paper as the market can bear. As noted, the market for recyclable paper is glutted; expansion is possible only overseas. The demand for recyclable plastic and aluminum has not yet been fully met, but Americans have been doing a pretty good job of returning their plastic bottles and aluminum cans, and the beverage industry, which hates it when states pass bottle bills, has pre-empted the issue in most places by opening up successful recycling centers.

SUPPOSE THERE WERE A LOT OF ROOM FOR GROWTH and that the demand for recycled paper, plastic, and aluminum were insatiable. How much garbage would Americans be prepared to recycle? The only factor that could conceivably drive a systematic recycling effort is money. Money is the reason why junk dealers pay attention to some kinds of garbage and not to others, and it is the reason why most people return cans to supermarkets, and newspapers to recycling centers.

I belabor that point because it is so often lost sight of, and because there are studies that seem to suggest—erroneously, I think—that for noble motives alone people would go to considerable lengths to make recycling a basic feature of American life. Barry Commoner, the biologist and environmentalist, recently conducted a study of a hundred households in Easthampton, Long Island, in which participants were asked to separate their garbage into four containers: one for food debris and soiled paper (to be composted into fertilizer), one for clean paper, one for metal cans and glass bottles, and one for all the rest. Commoner found that because the garbage was rationally discarded, a stunning 84 percent of it could be sold or recycled. Only 16 percent had to be deposited in a landfill. Of course, this experiment lasted only a few weeks, and the households surveyed had actively volunteered to take part. Recognizing that his results were perhaps a little skewed, Commoner conducted a survey in Buffalo, New York, and ascertained that a reassuring 78 percent of all respondents said, sure, they'd be willing to separate their garbage into four containers. However, only 26 percent of the respondents said that they thought their neighbors would be willing to do so. This "What would the neighbors do?" question has a special resonance for Garbage Project researchers. We have found over the years, by comparing interview data with actual trash, that the most accurate description of the behavior of any household lies in that household's description of the behavior of a neighboring household.

There have been studies that have claimed that the people most likely to recycle are those with the most money and the most education, but all these studies are based on people's "self-reports." A look through household garbage yields a different picture. From 1973 to 1980 The Garbage Project examined some 9,000 loads of refuse in Tucson from a variety of neighborhoods chosen for their socioeconomic characteristics. We carefully sorted the contents for newspapers, aluminum cans, and glass bottles (evidence that a household is not recycling), and for bottle caps, aluminum pop-tops, and plastic six-pack holders (possible evidence, in the absence of bottles or cans, that a household *is* recycling). A lot of complicated statistical adjustments and cross-referencing had to be done, but in the end we made three discoveries. First, people don't recycle as much as they say they do (but they recycle just about as much as they say their neighbors do). Second, household patterns of recycling

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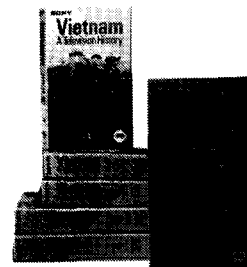
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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vary over time; recycling is not yet a consistent habit. Third, high income and education and even a measure of environmental concern do not predict household recycling rates. The only reliable predictor is the price paid for the commodity at buyback centers. When prices rose for, say, newsprint, the number of newspapers found in local garbage suddenly declined.

If there is a prosperous future for recycling, it probably lies in some sort of alliance between wastepaper and scrap dealers and local governments. Where recycling is concerned, municipalities are good at two things: collecting garbage and passing laws to legislate monetary incentives. Wastepaper and scrap dealers are good at something different: selling garbage. Local programs run by bureaucrats and tied to strict cost-accounting measures need predictable prices. Stability in a commodities market is rare. Secondary-materials dealers thrive on daily, hourly fluctuations.

Life-style Override

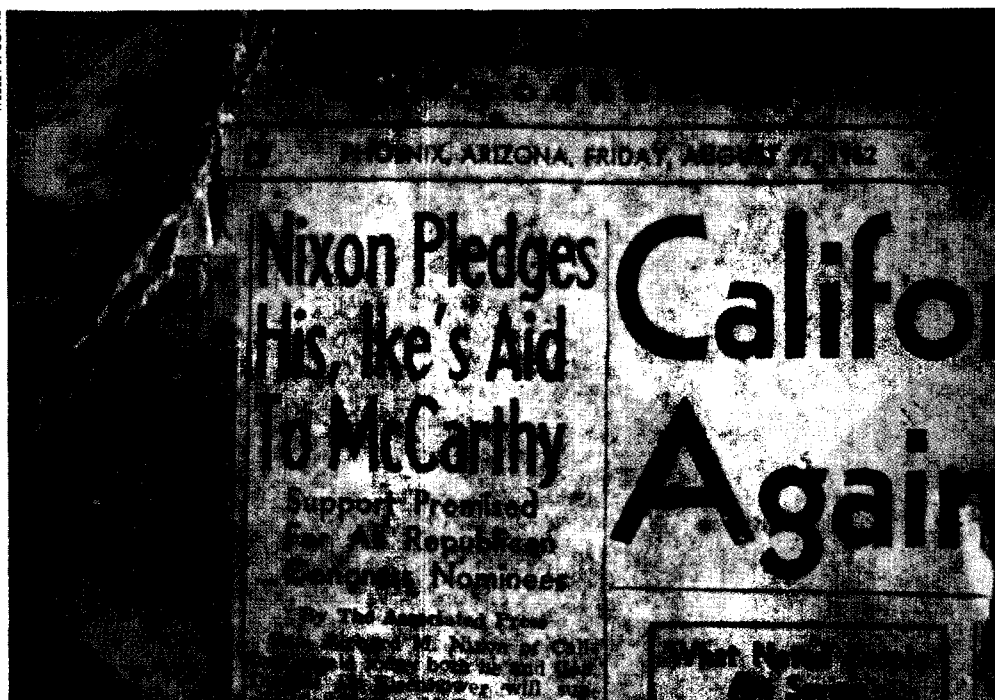
NOT LONG AGO I STOPPED IN BERKELEY, WHERE a ban was being considered on the use of expanded polystyrene foam—the substance that is turned into coffee cups and hamburger boxes and meat trays. The ban had originally been proposed because chlorofluorocarbons are used in the blowing of foam objects and are believed to contribute to the depletion of atmospheric ozone, and because foam objects are aesthetically repugnant to many people and symbolize the garbage problems we have. At the Berkeley campus of the University of California, I passed Sproul Plaza. It was lunchtime, and the plaza was filled

with some 700 or 800 students in various forms of repose; virtually all of them held on their laps what first appeared to be pairs of white wings. The wings turned out to be large foam clamshells, which held hot food. I asked one group of lunchers what they thought about a ban on polystyrene foam. Great idea, they said between mouthfuls, and without irony. The ban has since gone into effect, even though the major producers and users of chlorofluorocarbons agreed to a phase-out.

Source reduction is to garbage what preventive medicine is to health: a means of eliminating a problem before it can happen. But the utility of legislated source reduction is in many respects an illusion. For one thing, most consumer industries already have—and have responded to—strong economic incentives to make products as compact and as light as possible, for ease of distribution and to conserve costly resources. In 1970 a typical plastic soda bottle weighed sixty grams; today it weighs forty-eight grams and is more easily crushed. For another, who is to say when packaging is excessive? We have all seen small items in stores—can openers, say—attached to big pieces of cardboard hanging on a display hook. That piece of cardboard looks like excessive packaging, but its purpose is to deter shoplifting. Finally, source-reduction measures don't end up eliminating much garbage; hamburgers, eggs, and VCRs, after all, will still have to be put in *something*.

Most source-reduction plans are focused on a drastic reduction in the use of plastic. And yet in landfills foams and other plastics are dormant. While some environmentalists claim that plastics create dioxins when burned in incinerators, a study by New York State's Department of Energy Conservation cleared the most widely used plas-

WESLEY J. COPAS



A NEWSPAPER BROUGHT TO LIGHT AT THE RIO SALADO LANDFILL, 1989. MAKING MORE DISCARDS OUT OF BIODEGRADABLE MATERIALS IS OFTEN PROPOSED AS A SOLUTION TO OUR GARBAGE PROBLEMS. BUT THE IDEA THAT MUCH BIODEGRADATION OCCURS IN LINED LANDFILLS IS A MYTH.

tics of blame. The senior staff scientist of the National Audubon Society, Jan Beyea, contends that plastics in landfills are fine so long as they don't end up in the oceans. There plastic threatens marine animals, which can swallow or become enmeshed in it. Beyea's big complaint is against paper, whose production, he believes, creates large volumes of sulfur emissions that contribute to acid rain.

Ultimately, the source-reduction question is one of life-style override. The purists' theory is that industry is forcing plastics and convenience products on an unwilling captive audience. This is nonsense. American consumers, though they may in some spiritual sense lament packaging, as a practical matter depend on the product identification and convenience that modern packaging allows. That's the reason source reduction usually doesn't work.

Our "wasteful" life-style is a product of affluence; disregard for the environment is not. Indeed, our short-term aesthetic concerns and long-term practical concerns for the environment are luxuries afforded us only by our wealth. In Third World countries, where a job and the next meal are significant worries, the quality of the environment is hardly a big issue in most people's minds. Concern for the environment can be attributed in major part to the conveniences—and the leisure time they afford—that some activists seem to want to eliminate.

NONE OF THIS MAKES US UNIQUE. FOR ALL OUR newfangled technologies, Americans are not that different from those who inhabited most of the world's other great civilizations. Our social history fits neatly into the broader cycles of rise and decline that other peoples have experienced before us. Most grand civilizations seem to have moved, over time, from efficient scavenging to conspicuous consumption and then back again. It is a common story, usually driven by economic realities.

In their beginnings most civilizations, both ancient and recent, make efficient use of resources. The Preclassic Maya, who inhabited the rain forests of the southern Yucatan from 1200 to 300 B.C., seem to have lived relatively simple farming lives. They built a few small temples, constructed large houses out of thatch on low dirt platforms, and interred their dead with one or two monochrome pots. Around 300 B.C. something extraordinary happened. A Classic Maya life-style of conspicuous consumption was born. The Classic Maya went in for excessive display: fancy ceremonial clothes and feathered headdresses; tall temples with intricately carved façades; cache offerings of jade and shell mosaics; and lavish burials. This cult of conspicuous consumption spread throughout southern Mesoamerica. Toward the end of major civilizations things are usually quite different. During the Maya Decadent Period temples were small,

tombs were reused, and caches contained only a few pieces of broken pottery or chipped obsidian knives. Whatever the stimulus, that which archaeologists in the 1950s saw among the ancient Maya as decadence we can see today as efficient resource utilization. Among the Decadent Maya everything was recycled or reused, and virtually no resources were put away beyond easy retrieval. The Decadent Maya were living on the edge. They had no choice.

The United States is still well within a Classic phase, at least in terms of its disposal habits. And I am not worried that even if present trends continue, we will be buried in our garbage. To a considerable extent we will keep doing what other civilizations have done: rising *above* our garbage. (One of the great difficulties I have met in excavating landfills is finding municipal sites that have not already been covered by new facilities.)

A rough consensus has emerged among specialists as to how America can at least manage its garbage, if not make it pretty or go away. Safely sited and designed landfills should be employed in the three quarters of the country where there is still room for them. Incinerators with appropriate safety devices and trained workers can be usefully sited anywhere but make the most sense in the Northeast. And states and municipalities need to cut deals with wastepaper and scrap dealers on splitting the money to be made from recycling. This is a minimum. Several additional steps could be taken to reduce the biggest component of garbage: paper. Freight rates could be revised to make the transport of paper for recycling cheaper than the transport of wood for pulp. Also, many things could be done to increase the demand for recycled paper. For example, the federal government, which uses more paper by far than any other institution in America, could insist that most federal paperwork be done on recycled paper. Beyond confronting the biggest-ticket item head-on, most garbage specialists would recommend a highly selective attack on a few kinds of plastic: not because plastic doesn't degrade or is ugly or bulky but because recycling certain plastics in household garbage would yield high-grade costly resins for new plastics and make incineration easier on the furnace grates, and perhaps safer. Finally, we need to expand our knowledge base. At present we have more reliable information about Neptune than we do about this country's solid-waste stream.

One way or another, Americans will someday stand as exemplars of responsible garbage management. This could happen in the not too distant future, when time and resources and society's margin of error run out, and a Decadent America learns painfully to reuse and make do with whatever is at hand. Or it could come sooner, in a palmier and more recognizable time, if Americans, scoffing at history's odds, were to embrace a curious goal: to create the first civilization that became "decadent" before its time. □

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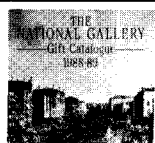
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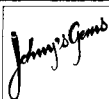
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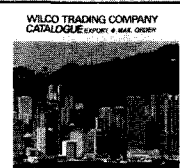
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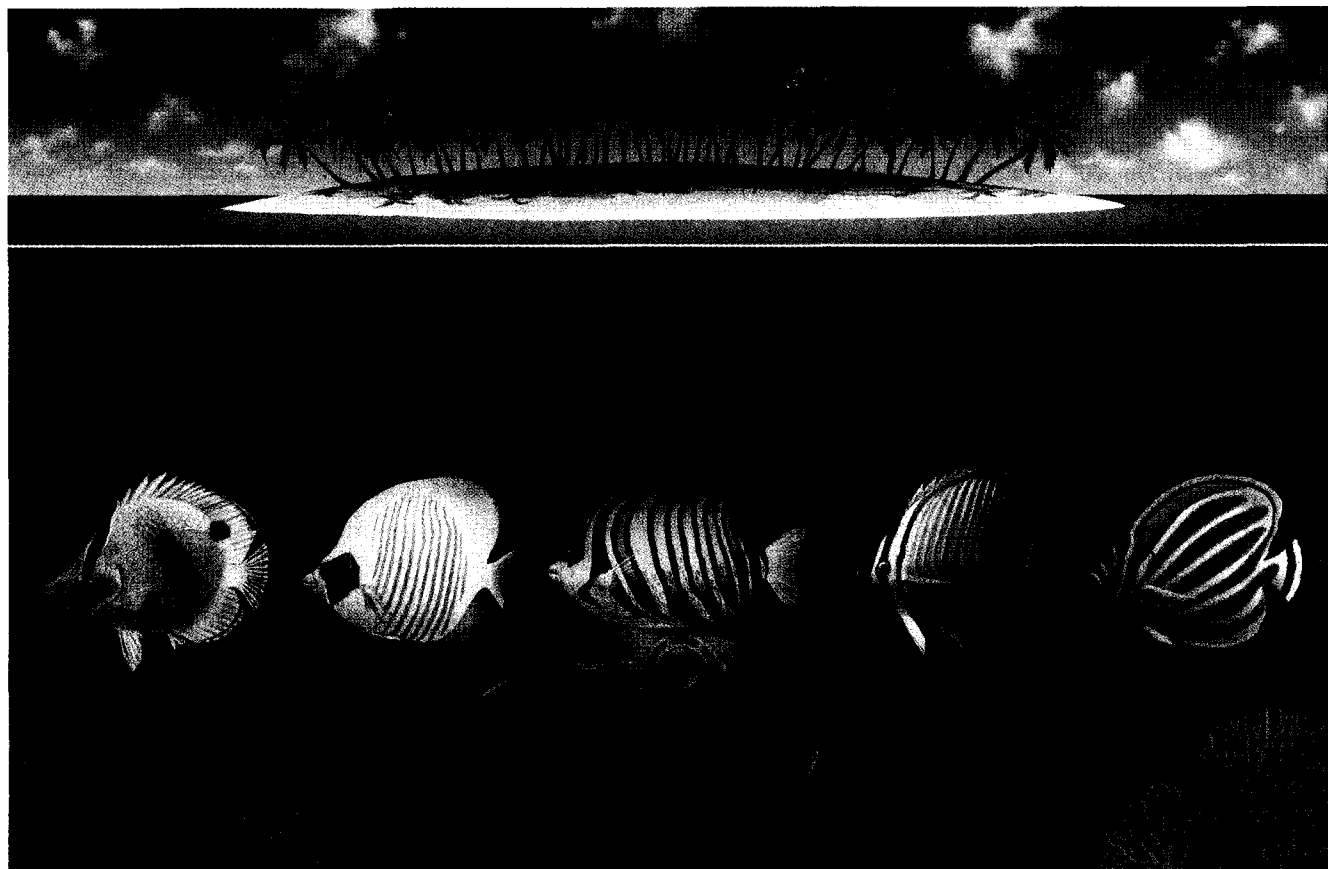
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Plunge Right In

Exhilarating Caribbean vacations by the sea, and in it

by Barbara Wallraff

EVERY EFFORT OF a person's muscles under water uses up air, and so diving guides—good ones—learn to make all their movements expressive. Chris Huxley did an about-face, twenty or so feet into the cave, and planted his flippers on the rocky bottom. Somehow it was clear not only that I was meant to turn around too but also that I was going to be impressed when I did.

Waves smacked the mouth of the cave a few feet above my head, sending whorls of spume flying against a background of blue sky. Below, the reef angled down sharply, fading into the distance and the depth. And in the center of the picture, framed within

the half-oval of the cave's mouth and floor, were great galaxies of fish: a vast angular school of small angular silver-sides, glinting, the school pulsing; and a rounder school of small rounded copper sweepers. Blue-gray, blue, white, silver, copper. . . it was a living abstract painting on the theme of the Creation.

It was, too, an example of what I like about scuba diving in the Caribbean. Diving is such a beautiful paradox: buckle yourself into forty or fifty pounds of equipment, weight yourself down further with a ballast-belt of lead, walk off a boat or wade out into the ocean like a suicide—and become weightless, free to move in every direction, through a spellbinding world.

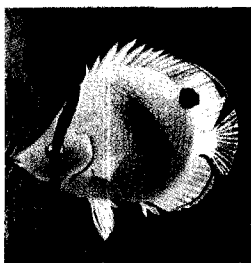
It doesn't matter if you've never gotten around to taking scuba lessons. (What would matter is health problems of various kinds. Talk over anything chronic with your doctor, and don't go diving when you don't feel well.) Most Caribbean dive shops offer half-day "resort courses," which will teach you what you need to know to take part safely in dives led by a trained instructor. For that matter, many shops offer four- or five-day-long diving-certification courses, which give you the skills to go diving on your own. Regardless, supervised dives are any Caribbean visitor's best bet, because the instructors know the local waters.

In a typical resort course you'll listen

to a short lecture on the physiology of diving, get some pointers on technique, and be fitted out with all the rental gear you need. (As niceties, take along a pair of snug-fitting socks, to keep fins from chafing, and a T-shirt and maybe runner's tights, to wear under water if you find you want a little extra warmth.) You'll practice using the gear in a swimming pool or in shallow water near the beach, and learn the skills to see you through mishaps—for example, how to find your "regulator," or air source, immediately if it's knocked out of your mouth. Once you've mastered the basics, the instructor will take you out on a real, if unambitious, dive. Then, for the remainder of your vacation, you'll be allowed to go on supervised dives down to thirty-five or forty feet.

Expect to be scared throughout the resort course and your first dive or two. Diving is even more strongly counterintuitive than flying. Eventually, though, you'll get caught up in what you're seeing—the Caribbean puts aquarium exhibits to shame. And the giddy freedom of weightlessness will begin to register. Soon you'll be bounding over coral heads and hanging upside down to look in crannies near the ocean floor.

The only hard part of a Caribbean dive vacation is figuring out exactly where to go. Any diver is going to spend the great majority of his vacation on land, since it's not considered safe to stay under for more than a few hours a day. And so it makes sense to seek out a resort with a competent, accommodating dive shop and attractive underwater scenery nearby, but with more to offer than just good diving. For myself, I don't insist on a casino, wild nightlife, or duty-free shopping, but I do like a comfortable, well-run resort, a handsome island with some points of interest at or above sea level, and welcoming or at least accepting locals. By these standards, I've found, islands that have built their reputations around diving aren't the only ones worth considering. And some islands whose underwater attractions are little known turn out to be very good choices. Here are two, and some suggestions about how to find more.



THE FIRST THING that impressed me about Anse Chastanet, a resort on the southwest coast of St. Lucia, I saw while diving: sand dollars lying unmolested just off the beach, under three or four feet of clear water. Why hadn't someone nabbed them? Other people must have noticed them. It was late in the day. People go diving off that beach all day long, and I could see snorkelers plowing along the surface. A few minutes after I ascended, I was introduced to Chris and Joyce Huxley, who manage Scuba St. Lucia, Anse Chastanet's dive shop. When I told them, in amazement, about the sand dollars, Chris said cheerfully, "We slap people's wrists if they take anything other than plastic bags and junk like that"—as if this explained how it was possible for an entire resortful of people to be so deferential to nature, and one another.

But I had arrived at Anse Chastanet by boat and, eccentrically, taken a dive in the bay before checking in. If I had come overland, through the rain forest, probably the view from my room would have been the first thing to impress me. "The most magnificent pair of mountains in the Caribbean" and "breathhtakingly spectacular," guidebooks say about the Pitons, St. Lucia's fraternal-twin scenic peaks. The guidebooks are right. Anse Chastanet is the only oceanfront hostelry from which the Pitons are visible. However, a glitzy new resort, complete with heliport, is being built between the Pitons by a group of Iranian investors—a reason, perhaps, to visit Anse Chastanet soon.

The resort's food is good, the staff friendly and efficient, and the location ideal, from my point of view: everything that makes noise, except for chirping insects and screaming birds, is far away, and the island's greatest scenic attractions are close by. St. Lucia boasts an active volcano, some mineral baths that were used by the soldiers of Louis XVI, and a pretty botanical garden with a waterfall, all of which can be taken in on a half-day excursion. The resort itself has tennis



courts, sailboards, and Sunfish for guests to use when they wish. And the dive sites just offshore are the island's best, as the other local dive shops regularly acknowledge by bringing their clients to dive in the area. In fact, my favorite spot, the cave that Chris Huxley guided me to, is only fifty or so fin-kicks out from the beach.

Most of Anse Chastanet's thirty-seven rooms and suites are a long stair-climb up a hill from the beach (and the remainder, on the beach, lack the view). All rooms are simply appointed with island-made furnishings—no air-conditioning, no TV, no telephone, no mini-bar—but they are large, airy, clean, and well laid out.

The price of being able to sit on your private terrace and watch the sun set opposite the Pitons is \$220 a night for two people in a standard room, with breakfast and dinner, or up to \$270 for a suite. And Anse Chastanet offers bargain scuba packages that bring the cost of the sport down to \$17.50 or less per dive.

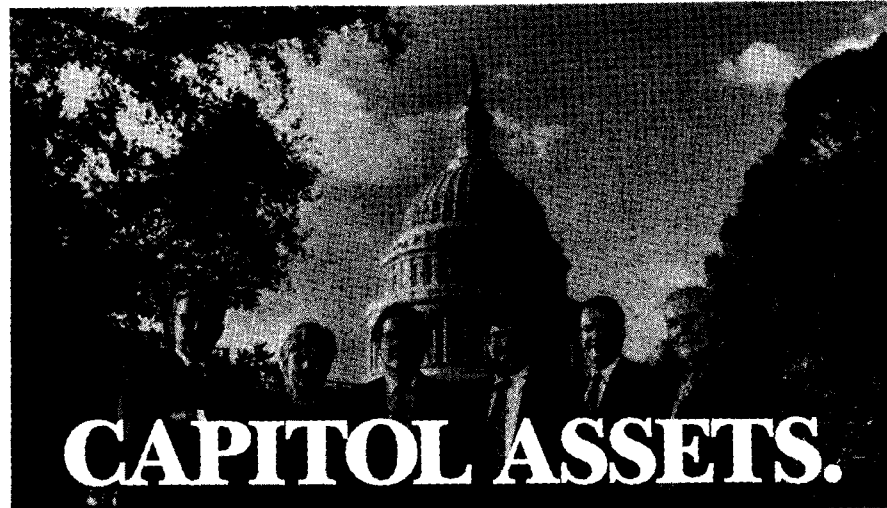
If you'd like to be less isolated and more pampered, Le Sport, at the northern tip of the island and within striking distance of the capital, Castries, is worth looking into. The current season is the resort's first full one in its new incarnation as an all-inclusive spa. Le Sport was previously the Steigenberger Caribblue, which catered to a mainly European clientele. Now under local ownership, it has been thoroughly redecorated and renovated; all rooms have air-conditioning and phones. A thalassotherapy (water-massage) center, looking like a Moorish palace high up on a hill, has been built, and a wide range of beauty treatments and sports programs are offered. Everything, from scuba and beauty treatments to drinks at the bar and *cuisine légère* meals (or regular ones, for those who would rather think of Le Sport as a resort than as a spa), is included in the basic price, of \$520 to \$600 a night for two.

Le Sport's scuba program provides a resort course, two or three supervised dives a week to guests who have taken the course or who are certified, and the use of equipment at other times to certified divers. If you want to dive more than that—or just for a change of

pace—you can make arrangements with almost any dive shop on the island to come pick you up. I dived a few times with Phil Worrall, the hearty English proprietor of an outfit called Buddies Scuba (Worrall was until recently doubling as the head of Le Sport's scuba program), and also with Vitus Joyeux, the antic St. Lucian manager of the dive shop at the Mari-got Bay resort, which is owned by the yacht-charter company The Moorings and is the St. Lucian resort of choice for those whose first love is sailing. I wouldn't hesitate to dive again with either of these guides. Worrall is friendly, conscientious, and knowledgeable. Joyeux is a trip. He just couldn't stop scooping up things for me to play with or at least admire: a tiny purple-spotted shrimp, a brittle starfish, a shaggy gold sea lily, a lobster . . . The rabbit-out-of-a-hat effect finally made me giggle.

BERT KILBRIDE, ON the North Sound of Virgin Gorda, British Virgin Islands, is a living, diving advertisement for scuba. Now seventy-five years old, he looks a weathered fifty-five. He has been diving in the BVI since 1958, and he has dived a lot. He boasts that he has circumnavigated each of the British Virgins with a tank on his back. In the early 1960s Kilbride invented the resort course, when it occurred to him that people coming down to the islands on vacation might like to see the wreck of the *Rhone*. The *Rhone*, a British mail packet that broke up in a storm in 1867, has since become a world-famous dive site, one that practically every diving visitor to the Virgin Islands is eager to see. The bow section lies in eighty feet of water, the stern in forty. Coral has colorfully overgrown the parts, and fish school in them like gaudy teenagers in a shopping mall.

In 1977, fifteen years after Kilbride inaugurated his three-hour course, an official from one of the scuba certifying organizations got around to paying a visit to see what it was like. Within a month the resort course was officially sanctioned, and soon dive shops everywhere began to offer versions of it. In 1987 Kilbride was awarded a NOGI, the scuba industry's Oscar or Nobel, for his contributions to diving education. Ironically, also in 1987 dive shops' insurance companies started insisting,



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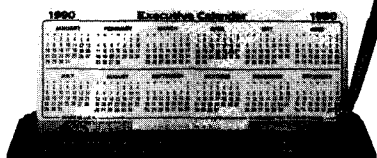
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for reasons of their own, that uncertified divers be restricted to depths of forty feet or less, so now resort-course graduates can no longer visit the bow section of the *Rhone*. (Kilbride and other diving instructors I've talked to think this regulation is idiotic.)

Kilbride's Underwater Tours has its headquarters—and Bert Kilbride and his wife, Gayla, make their home—on something called Saba Rock, in the North Sound of Virgin Gorda. Three quarters of an acre in size at high tide, an acre at low, the Saba Rock fiefdom is conveniently just offshore from the Bitter End Yacht Club resort. The Kilbrides often stop by one of the Bitter End's bars in the evening. The shop's diving instructors, who include one of Bert's sons, take their morning coffee at the resort, before heading out for the day's first dive. The Bitter End prides itself—rightly—on all that it has to offer sailors, but it's an excellent choice for divers and others, too.

Proximity to Kilbride's is only part of the reason. The area is lovely, in a semi-arid sort of way, and it's mostly undeveloped and all peaceful. And then, the Bitter End has many fine qualities of its own. Everywhere I looked, I got the sense that someone had thought about what made sense, what would please the guests, and had made small innovations accordingly. I stayed in one of the hillside "chalets" that the resort acquired in 1987, when it took over the former Tradewinds resort, next door. Each chalet has a huge shower that's actually outdoors; showering feels especially sensuous and natural, and you don't steam up the room. A dresser in each room contains slide-out white-wire baskets, instead of potentially dusty and damp-retaining drawers. Guests have two nice restaurants to choose between at dinner: the Clubhouse, which specializes in fish and steaks, cooked to order, and the English Carvery, which specializes in joints of meat, sliced to order. While you're sitting at dinner, someone from the sports staff comes by to find out what you'd like to do the next day—join an excursion to town? take out a sailboat or a sailboard? play tennis? go diving?—and signs you up. You never have to stand in line at an activities desk or run around to the various concessions.

The Bitter End has rooms on the beach as well as on the hillside. Rates

range from \$320 to \$470 a night for two, and include meals and all sports except, alas, diving (a package of three two-tank dives, with some equipment included, costs \$150). The hillside location means that you have to make a longish trek or else phone for a golf cart to come and get you every time you want to go to one of the restaurants or the beach. But the chalets have air-conditioning, and the panorama of the North Sound is laid out before you. All rooms have phones; a few have TVs, VCRs, and bars. If you're indifferent to such amenities, then maybe one of the Bitter End's live-aboard yachts is for you.

I'M SORRY TO report that I have yet to find a guidebook whose judgments about diving-related matters seem trustworthy. Nonetheless, some guidebooks (*Frommer's Caribbean* especially) are good on resorts and on what particular islands have to offer generally. And most guidebooks contain the phone numbers of dive shops (*Birnbaum's Caribbean, Bermuda, and the Bahamas* is the best on this score). That is really all you need to begin planning other dive vacations.

The technique is simple: Get together the phone numbers of some dive shops on islands that interest you, and call them up. Try to talk to the owner or manager or at least a diving guide. What is there to see under water? How often do the shop's boats or guides go to the spots that you might like to see? How long have the guides been working in local waters? How many divers do they take out at once? (More is definitely not merrier—groups of five or fewer are ideal, and groups of fifteen or more are to be disdained.) What are the nearby resorts like? Would the dive shop be willing to pick you up from more-distant resorts? Do guests at those places seem happier? Beginners or uncertified novices will also want to know if the shop offers a resort course and what dives they'll be permitted to go on after they've taken it.

But the most important question is one to ask yourself: Are you talking with someone who loves diving in that place and is eager to share it with you? If the answer is yes, book the trip. Whether or not you find the perfect resort, you're going to be sorry when you have to come up for air. □



The Voices of Kurt Weill

New recordings and reissued classics speak to a modern audience

by Lloyd Schwartz

KURT WEILL HAS probably never been more popular. His spotty career certainly had its episodes of great success: his first collaborations, in late-1920s Berlin, with the playwright Bertolt Brecht, and two pre-Pearl Harbor Broadway hits. In 1954, four years after his death, an off-Broadway revival of *The Threepenny Opera* racked up a seven-year run at the Theatre de Lys. (The first Broadway production, in 1933, closed after twelve performances.) But it was perhaps *Cabaret*—the 1966 hit musical that, though not by Weill, owed nearly

everything to him, and even co-starred his widow, Lotte Lenya—that triggered the current explosion of interest in him. Last month *The Threepenny Opera* opened on Broadway with the British rock icon Sting in the role of Mack the Knife. Landmark Weill recordings are being reissued on compact disc, and new recordings are being greeted with unprecedented enthusiasm. An album of Weill songs on the London label by the young German musical-comedy star Ute Lemper, for instance, has been among *Billboard*'s top ten "crossover" hits for most of 1989,

mainly at the very top of the chart.

Like most successes, this one is a mixed blessing. What appeals to a popular audience isn't necessarily the most accurate representation of an artist's work. A hypothetical album called *Kurt Weill's Biggest Hits* would have to include the exuberant but sanitized American-style pop versions by Bobby Darin and Louis Armstrong of "Mack the Knife," a song about a murderer and rapist that has recently been used in a McDonald's commercial. Lemper's approach to Weill is more subtly damaging. She's a glamorous performer, intense and uninhibited, putting out a lot of rhythmic energy and sex appeal, but with a brassy and often wobbly voice, and without much taste or sincerity. A Weill album that she recorded for Bayer Records in Germany in 1986, when she was twenty-three, is even more fascinating and appalling. She overacts shamelessly and turns the puncturing ironies of Weill's classic theater music into crude melodrama. In Weill's American songs she falls into a strident, mannered imitation of 1950s American pop crooners and belters like Teresa Brewer and Connie Francis, bending notes and breaking them in two. On her later record Lemper is mellower and more calculating, with a spookier but still unconvincing American accent. The Lemper phenomenon seems the result of the skillful marketing of her fleshly rather than her vocal assets.

Lemper's most immediate models are probably the two classy Nonesuch recordings by the Metropolitan Opera soprano Teresa Stratas, *The Unknown Kurt Weill* (1981) and *Stratas Sings Weill* (1986). These have their problems too, the opposite of Lemper's. Stratas barely avoids the quicksand of inflation and condescension into which classically trained singers attempting popular material often sink. But she's an expressive singer with a beautiful voice, and the unfamiliar songs—including several cabaret songs—are real finds. (The two Lemper albums duplicate about half the Stratas numbers.)

FROM THE VERY beginning these songs have been regarded as examples of modern sophistication. Weill wrote his musical comedies and operas for a knowing audience, world-weary and cynical. In *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, Jenny and six

girls sing the "Alabama Song," in Brecht's original English:

Oh, show us the way to the next
whisky-bar!
Oh, don't ask why—oh, don't ask
why!

Insinuation and innuendo are here explicit. The song is about what is too crude for even these low-life characters to name. Even out of context, as in the hit 1967 rock version by the Doors, would anyone need to "ask why"? Weill's songs appeal to a universal desire to be in the know, to feel in on things—for Weill's original audience, ominous and terrible things.

In the Germany of the late twenties "knowing" helped make the listener more than a passive victim. Being wised up helped disarm potential danger, made one feel superior to it. The didacticism of Weill and Brecht, as they themselves called it, implied the possibility, however unlikely, of improvement. Today knowledge seems only to feed our cynicism, our sense of helplessness before overwhelming powers. We've learned that we can't

change the world—why should we try? It's naive to think that music can mobilize. So we listen to these powerful indictments and calls to action, to the satire and the anger, and take pleasure in getting the jokes, catching the ironies, humming the tunes. We can now feel nostalgic, not responsible.

One of Weill's best jokes is the way his songs mix the elegant and the tawdry, the serious and the trivial, the cynical and the sentimental. His technical background in music—the son of a cantor, he was a student of Engelbert Humperdinck and Ferruccio Busoni—gave him a familiarity with, and power over, complex structures and a variety of forms which few songwriters have had. (Stephen Sondheim is a rare exception; Weill must have been a role model for his serious use of popular idioms.) He knew and used Handel choruses and Bach chorales, grand opera and Schoenbergian *Sprechstimme*, as well as hymns and marches, Broadway and Tin Pan Alley tunes, cabaret and music-hall numbers, and dance music: his scores are full of tangos, waltzes, and fox-trots. He could write a fugue,

so he could also write a parody of one.

Weill undercuts his own prettiness with piquant, often discordant harmonies and coarse textures, like organ-grinder music, with winds and keyboard taking precedence over strings; phrases abruptly foreshortened or elongated and irregular stanza lengths; and startling, slithery, erotic turns in the melodies themselves. This is Weill's modernist sophistication. Oozing sentimentality tries to drown the cynicism; astringent cynicism works to disinfect the sentimentality. Ultimately the combination is neither cynical nor sentimental but seductive and fraught with danger—seductive *because* fraught with danger.

BOOTH LEMPER AND Stratas have the ungratifying task of following in the vocal footsteps of Lotte Lenya, the great singing actress who not only was married to Weill, twice, but also created the most famous of his German heroines, the Jennys of *The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny*. Her performances and recordings of his music, almost to the time of her death, in 1981, have come to define its essential qualities. Lenya's tremulous high soprano and, later, gravelly baritone exude the romanticism gone sour that is at the heart of Weill's best vocal music. Weill said that his melodies came to his "inner ear" in her voice. But some of the songs most closely associated with her had to be revised to suit her, or were reassigned to her after their original performances. The chilling ballad of oppression and revenge, "Pirate Jenny or Dreams of a Kitchen Maid," virtually Lenya's theme song, was first written for the ingenue in *The Threepenny Opera*, Polly Peachum, not the "experienced" Jenny Diver, played by Lenya. But as early as 1930, on the "original cast" German recording (recently reissued as an Encore cassette), and in G. W. Pabst's powerful 1931 film adaptation (now on videotape), Lenya had appropriated the song. To this day no one has approached her piercing fusion of icy malevolence and quavering vulnerability.

Lenya is such an authentic presence that any project involving her has its own built-in authority. The complete recordings of *The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny*, featuring Lenya and made in the late 1950s under her supervision



(now on CBS Masterworks compact discs), are irreplaceable historical documents, not to mention gripping theater. The *Threepenny Opera* recording restores two numbers cut from the first production, although any possible new Weill recordings might represent more accurately the letter of the original scores. On her recording of *Happy End*, Lenya takes all the solos herself. In *The Seven Deadly Sins*, Lenya sings the dual roles she created, Anna I and II, transposed down to accommodate her reduced vocal capacities. The glittering new Michael Tilson Thomas recording of *The Seven Deadly Sins* (CBS) has Julia Migenes singing with an unmistakably Lenya-ish inflection and flair, and on a 1983 recording under Simon Rattle (Angel), the soprano Elise Ross sings the Annas, rather wanly, in the original higher key. In spite of Lenya's vocal strain and the problematic alterations in key, her version remains by far the most moving and characterful.

Weill was never just a songwriter, but his theater songs, eminently excerptable because they were written to stand apart from the dramatic action, are surely what most efficiently preserve his reputation. Lenya's strongest recording is probably *Berlin Theatre Songs*, a generous selection of the most memorable numbers from Weill's greatest scores: the "Moritat" ("Ballad of Mack the Knife"), the "Barbara Song," and "Pirate Jenny," from *The Threepenny Opera*; the "Alabama Song," the "Havana Song," and "Wie man sich better" ("As you make your bed"), from *Mahagonny*; the "Bilbao Song," the hilariously harrowing "Sailor Tango," and Weill's best torch song, "Surabaya Johnny," from *Happy End*. There are also discoveries, like the poignant "Fennimore's Song" (the ballad of a poor relation) and the angry "Caesar's Death," both from *Der Silbersee*, Georg Kaiser's "winter's tale" (recently performed and recorded by the New York City Opera in a much-revised version called *Silverlake*), and the eerily graphic "Ballad of the Drowned Girl," about Rosa Luxemburg, from *The Berlin Requiem*, a radio cantata based on five grimly powerful poems by Brecht. Lenya is at her peak here, delivering these songs with unaffected directness, while more than any other performer projecting the full array of musical styles that Weill plays off.

Lenya also recorded an album of

theater songs that Weill wrote after he emigrated to America, in 1935. On it are songs from *Knickerbocker Holiday*, the show in which Walter Huston, as Peter Stuyvesant, introduced "September Song"; *Lady in the Dark*, a satire on psychiatry that starred Gertrude Lawrence and launched Danny Kaye; *One Touch of Venus*, with Mary Martin cast in the title role; *The Firebrand of Florence*, an ambitious failure about Cellini, with Lenya, probably miscast, as a glamorous duchess; *Love Life*, an experimental "vaudeville" with book and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner; *Street Scene*, Weill's "American opera," based on Elmer Rice's play, with lyrics by Rice and Langston Hughes; and *Lost in the Stars*, a "musical tragedy" based on Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, starring Todd Duncan. Weill's other collaborators on these musicals included Maxwell Anderson, Ira Gershwin, Ogden Nash (who wrote some of his best verses for Weill), and S. J. Perelman. Some critics have called Weill's assimilated American style sentimental. There is certainly an increasing smoothness in his scoring, an absence of the quicksilver musical wit that shoots through his pre-war anger and romanticism. Still, there are strong numbers, all the stronger for the sly edge Lenya lends them.

These two recordings were combined as a two-LP set called *The Lotte Lenya Album*, on CBS. The new CD version, *Kurt Weill: Berlin & American Theater Songs*, considerably improves on the original engineering, but in order to fit both LPs onto one CD, CBS not only omitted the four least known German songs (the "Sailor Tango" and the arias from *Der Silbersee* and *The Berlin Requiem*) but without acknowledgment removed the central sections of "Surabaya Johnny" and the "Bilbao Song"—fully a third of each number. (Ironically, the accompanying booklet prints all the words.) These abridgments butcher Weill's innovative structures. They leave out some of Lenya's most spine-tingling moments and leave others improperly prepared for. CBS is now planning to reinstate these missing verses when the current supply of the CD runs out, but there will probably be no indication on the packaging of which version is on sale. An entirely new Weill CD contemplated by CBS may include Lenya's four missing Berlin songs.

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GREY OWL by Kenneth Brower

Though little known in the United States, this writer-in-headress was one of the great North American environmentalists. But where had he been a papoose?



PICTURES OF THE ICE by Alice Munro

"Three weeks before he died—drowned in a lake whose name nobody had heard him mention—Austin Cobbett stood deep in the clasp of a three-way mirror in Crawford's Men's Wear in a burgundy sports shirt and a pair of cream, brown, and burgundy plaid pants." A short story.

Lenya also sings Jenny Diver on the original-cast album of the 1954 Theatre de Lys production of *The Threepenny Opera* (Polydor), with Marc Blitzstein's brilliant and haunting English translation unfortunately bowdlerized for the recording. This album is memorable also for Charlotte Rae's raucous but moralistic Mrs. Peachum and Beatrice Arthur's gutsy Lucy Brown. In the "Barbara Song" ("The Song of No and Yes"), a song of lost innocence and a nostalgia for sexual humiliation, Arthur's hard-earned, hard-boiled worldly wisdom matches Lenya's own.

Lenya also appears briefly on the 1956 recording (now on a Polydor CD) of Weill's first American enterprise, the anti-war parable by Paul Green, *Johnny Johnson*, produced in 1936 by the Group Theater with a cast that included Lee J. Cobb, Elia Kazan, Luther Adler, Morris Carnovsky, and John (then known as Jules) Garfield. The score is a forgotten gem, gentler than Weill's German pieces, very pretty, but no less ironic. Besides Lenya as the French nurse who propositions the wounded Johnny in the song "Mon Ami, My Friend," the reissue has Burgess Meredith in the title role, Hiram Sherman, and Scott Merrill (the Theatre de Lys Macheath).

Another important reissue is a recording made in 1955 of the musically appealing but creepy 1930 Brecht-Weill "school opera," *Der Jasager* (*The Yes-Sayer*), based on a Japanese Noh play about a young boy who sacrifices himself to a barbaric tradition. Another CD couples the deep-throated Gisela May's memorable version of *The Seven Deadly Sins*, conducted by Herbert Kegel, with David Atherton's impressive 1975 performance of *The Berlin Requiem*. Most of these Polydor CDs have been superbly remastered and lovingly produced by Larry L. Lash, with archival photographs, interviews, and richly informative historical essays. And CBS has reissued on CD the original-cast recording of extended excerpts from *Street Scene*, with Anne Jeffreys, Polyna Stoska, and Brian Sullivan, and has reprinted with it a personal memoir by Weill himself.

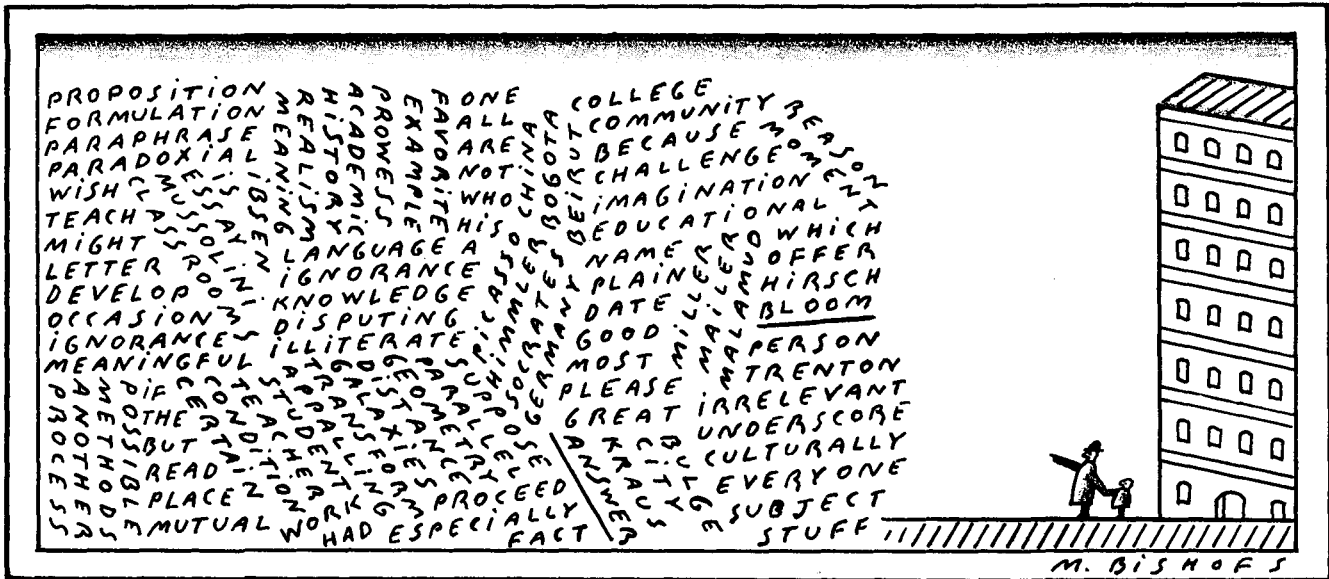
The German label Capriccio has been producing new Weill recordings. So far it has released a complete *Mahagonny*, starring Anja Silja, and *The Tsar Has His Photograph Taken* (a one-act "opera

buffa" about terrorism, with a text by Georg Kaiser), the first of Weill's pre-Brecht operas to be recorded; Jan Latham-König conducts the Cologne Radio Orchestra on both. The first recordings of *The Ballad of Magna Carta* and *The Lindbergh Flight* are next.

DESPITE THE REVIVAL of interest, major Weill scores remain unavailable on disc. What some critics consider his most important work, his 1931 sociopolitical opera with Caspar Neher, *Die Bürgschaft* (*The Pledge*), has never been recorded. There has never been a complete commercial recording of his 1934 Paris musical, *Marie Galante*, or of *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *The Firebrand of Florence*, or *Love Life*. There used to be original-cast albums of *One Touch of Venus* and *Lost in the Stars*, and two recordings each of *Happy End* (the one with Lenya and an abridged version conducted by David Atherton), *Lady in the Dark* (including an RCA Victor Vintage LP with Gertrude Lawrence), and the folk opera *Down in the Valley* (both supervised by Weill). The Lenya *Happy End*, along with her *Seven Deadly Sins*, is scheduled for eventual CD reissue by CBS. Perhaps the success of Ute Lemper will suggest a reason for other companies to reissue the rest.

On the other hand, some extraordinary "lost" items have resurfaced. The Encore cassette featuring the original 1930 *Threepenny Opera* recording with Lenya also includes four blistering excerpts from the *Threepenny Suite* recorded in 1931 by Otto Klemperer, who commissioned it and had led the first performance only two years earlier (this recording is also available on a stunningly remastered early-Klemperer CD on Symposium). On the cassette are also two *Threepenny Opera* songs, "Mack the Knife" and "The Song About Inadequacy" (Blitzstein translated it as the "Useless Song"), recorded in 1932 by Bertolt Brecht. His voice is riveting: hard-core, rough-edged, gin-soaked, yet rhythmically electric. Like Lenya, he confronts us with harsh truths and then makes us dance to them. No singer would envy these voices, yet no singer can afford to ignore them. They are the living voices of Weill's nervy, still elusive, yet apparently—no matter who is singing—ineradicable music. □

Books



Learning by Story

by Neil Postman

NOW THAT THE thunderstorm ignited by the celebrated texts of E. D. Hirsch, Jr., (*Cultural Literacy*) and Allan Bloom (*The Closing of the American Mind*) has passed over the land and appears to present no further danger to our intellectual landscape, it may be useful to review, under clearer skies, the lessons to be drawn from the drenching. To do this, I will attempt a deconstruction of their texts—deconstruction being the method employed today by academics whose positions have been secured by tenure. In other words, I will proceed on the assumption that it is permissible for a reader to believe that he knows more about a text than its writer, and is therefore free to instruct the writer on what his book is really about.

To start at the end, as it were, I want to show that in *Cultural Literacy*, Professor Hirsch believes he is offering a solution to a problem when in fact he is only raising a question—and a desperate question at that. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Professor Bloom sug-

gests an answer to Hirsch's question for reasons that are not entirely clear to him but are, of course, to me.

For those who have not read *Cultural Literacy*, I should say that much of the book's popularity is attributable to its appendix, which consists of a list of 5,000 names, dates, aphorisms, and concepts that Hirsch and some of his colleagues believe a literate person ought to know. Americans love lists, especially lists compiled by experts; Americans also love tests, and Hirsch's list is easily transformed into a kind of cultural-literacy test that can be administered anywhere, including the living room and the classroom. Aside from the fact that Hirsch is a lucid and sometimes elegant writer, very little else in the book can account for its success either with teachers or with the common reader. To paraphrase an old saw, what is true in Hirsch's book is not startling, and what is startling is not true.

Let us start with what is true. Hirsch believes that the more one knows, the more one can learn—a proposition with which few would disagree. He also believes that you can't read reading. You have to read *about* something. And therefore, to be literate, you have to know about the things you are reading about. There is no disputing this proposition either, or its negative for-

mulation, which is that if you do not know anything about what you are reading about, you may be said to be illiterate in that subject. I have a son who works as an astrophysicist and who has published several papers in his specialty, which happens to be the structure of galaxies. He has been kind enough to send a copy of each of his papers, in the expectation, no doubt, that I will take pleasure in reading them. I would if I could. Unfortunately, I cannot, for the simple reason that I do not know the meanings of 90 percent of the words in his papers. I can *pronounce* the words, of course, but this is quite different from reading them. Hirsch would say that my problem is that I am not literate in astrophysics, and in this he would be entirely correct. I do much better, by the way, with my daughter's papers on the subject of theater history. When she writes about naturalism or realism or Ibsen's point of view on idealism, I know perfectly well what I am reading about, because I know the meanings of her words.

Hirsch is simply saying that every subject has its special language, and you cannot know the subject, or read the subject, if you do not know its language. There is an old and somewhat paradoxical joke about this point. It tells of a mother who is boasting to a

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friend about her son's academic prowess. To prove her case, she calls her son into the room and says, "Harold, say something in geometry for Mrs. Freeman." The point of the joke is supposed to be that the mother has demonstrated only her ignorance, not Harold's knowledge. But in fact there is no point to the joke, because Harold could say many things in geometry, such as "Parallel lines never meet," and "Equals added to equals are equal," and "The shortest distance between two points is a straight line."

These ideas—the more you know, the more you can learn; you can't read reading; every subject makes use of a special language—are, as I have said, certainly true, but they are hardly startling. I do not know a single teacher who disputes them, although I suppose it does no harm to be reminded of them once in a while. Hirsch proceeds from these truisms to a consideration of the appalling ignorance of our students. This is a condition that most teachers, especially high school and college teachers, have noticed. Almost every teacher has some favorite examples of student ignorance, and more than occasionally these days essays appear in the popular press documenting our students' curious illiteracies. Some months ago I received in the mail such an essay, written by a teacher at a community college in Olympia, Washington. He had prepared an eighty-six-question cultural-literacy test, which he gave to the twenty-six students in his class. The students ranged in age from eighteen to fifty-four, and all had completed at least one quarter of college-level work. Here are some things his students knew: Charles Darwin invented gravity. Jesus Christ was born in the sixteenth century. The Great Gatsby was a magician in the 1930s. Heinrich Himmler invented the Heimlich maneuver. Benito Mussolini was a Russian leader of the eighteenth century. Pablo Picasso painted masterpieces in the twelfth century. Socrates was an American Indian chieftain. Mark Twain invented the cotton gin. The city of Belfast is located in Egypt, Beirut is in Germany, and Bogotá is in China.

Of course, there's some pretty funny stuff here, but we had all better keep in mind that the furniture in *our* heads has its own peculiar gaps and disarrangements, which might be hard to

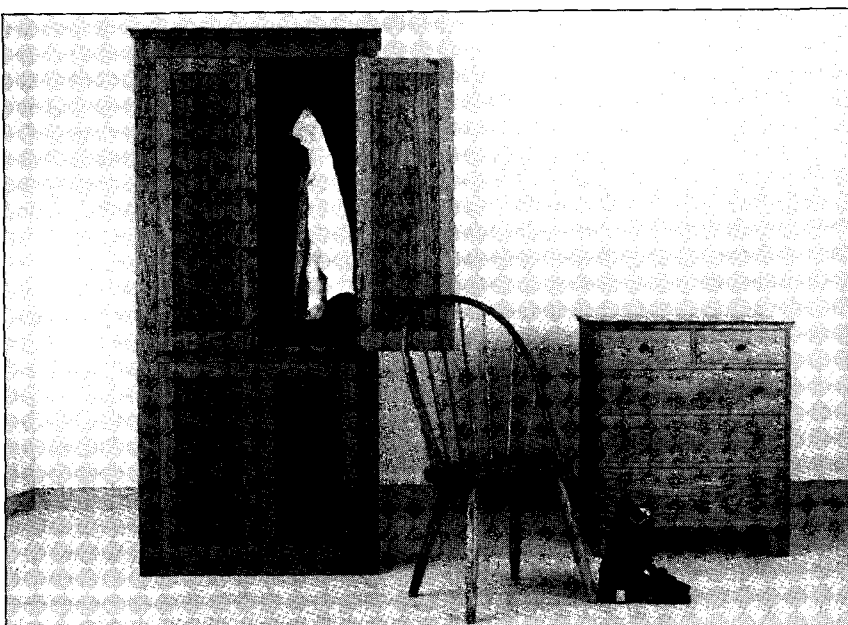
conceal were we confronted by a cultural-literacy test. In my own case, I find that scarcely a day passes without my hearing for the first time about a person or place about which everyone else seems to know. I suspect that you are familiar with this problem as well. If you are, there is a very good reason for our shared ignorance, and I will come to it in a moment. But here I must take notice of what is both startling and false in Hirsch's book. Faced with the fact of widespread ignorance, Hirsch comes up with an explanation that must have been a considerable challenge to his imagination. The problem, he says, is "educational formalism." He means by this that teachers are no longer concerned with academic content but are instead obsessed with the processes or skills of learning. We try to teach how scientists think, but without reference to the content of science. We try to teach how to read, but ignore what the text is about. We try to teach what historians do, but without attending to history itself. And so on. That is why, he says, our students are culturally illiterate and cannot learn very much. Teachers no longer give students names, places, dates—in a word, the facts.

I CALL THIS EXPLANATION wrong for two reasons. First, if there is one thing that most teachers in America are *not* concerned with, it is the processes of learning. This can be verified by spending a few days visiting representative American classrooms, an inconvenience that Hirsch apparently did not wish to endure. Instead, he draws his evidence from textbooks on methods of teaching, which have as much relevance to what is actually happening in classrooms as campaign speeches have to do with the actual running of government. But Hirsch is wrong for another, even more important reason. As any teacher who *is* concerned with process can tell you, it is scarcely possible to teach how something is done without also teaching content. How can you teach how a poem might be read without also teaching the poem? How can you teach how a scientific theory is developed without reference to the great theories that the great scientists have constructed? The thing cannot be done—at least, *almost* cannot be done. A small exception might be made for the occa-

sion of teaching the letters of the alphabet. It is probably true that when the very young are being taught to read, the emphasis is almost wholly on how to decode the words. What the words say is often treated as irrelevant. This may or may not be a mistake—Bruno Bettelheim thinks it is—but in any case it cannot account for the widespread cultural illiteracy that is so disturbing to Hirsch. There are, to put it plainly, very few school systems anywhere that do not start emphasizing the content of subjects by, let us say, the fourth grade.

Nonetheless, Hirsch is convinced that educational formalism is at the root of the ignorance problem, and he offers a solution in the form of his list, which, he suggests, contains the references essential to a culturally literate person in America, and which any curriculum ignores at its peril. If I may borrow an aphorism from the turn-of-the-century Viennese journalist Karl Kraus: Hirsch's list is the disease for which it claims to be the cure—that is to say, its arbitrariness only demonstrates the futility of trying to do what he wants us to do. His list includes Norman Mailer but not Philip Roth, Bernard Malamud, Arthur Miller, or Tennessee Williams. It includes Ginger Rogers but not Richard Rodgers, Carl Rogers, or Buck Rogers, let alone Fred Rogers. The second greatest home-run hitter of all time, Babe Ruth, is there, but not the greatest home-run hitter, Hank Aaron. The Marx brothers are there but not Orson Welles, Frank Capra, John Ford, or Steven Spielberg. Sarah Bernhardt is included but not Leonard Bernstein. Rochester, New York, is on the list. Trenton, New Jersey, one of our most historic cities, is not. Hirsch includes the Battle of the Bulge, which pleased my brother, who fought in it in 1944. But my uncle who died in the Battle of the Coral Sea, in 1942, would have been disappointed to find that it didn't make the list. (I refer here to the list as it appears in the first, 1987, edition of the book. Hirsch has since written a book that supplements the list, which only underscores the futility of his enterprise.)

I could go on with this almost endlessly, as anyone could. For every person, event, city, book, or saying Hirsch lists, one could list ten he has omitted that would be equally relevant or irrel-



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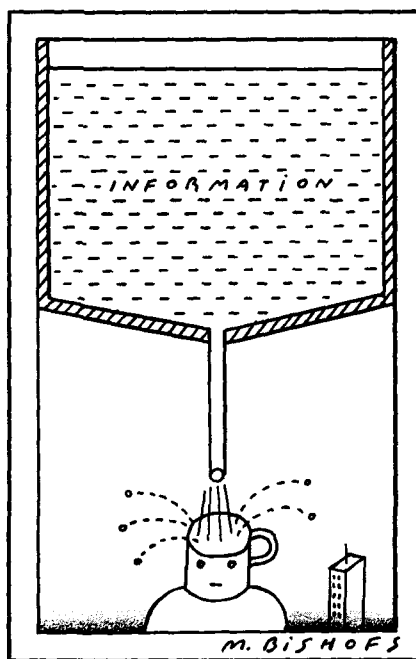
evant. And therein lies the paradox. Hirsch believes that he is offering educators a solution to ignorance when he is in fact only posing an unanswered question about its origin. The question is this: What are educators to do when they must serve in a culture inundated by information?

From millions of sources all over the globe, through every possible channel and medium—light waves, airwaves, ticker tapes, computer banks, telephone wires, television cables, printing presses—information pours in. Behind it, in every imaginable form of storage—on paper, on video and audio tapes, on discs, film, and silicon chips—is an even greater volume of information waiting to be retrieved and used. More is being added every hour, every minute, every second. Clearly, we are swamped by information. Drowning in it. Overwhelmed by it. And what is Hirsch's solution? We should use the schools to teach the kids some information. No. It is not a serious idea. We might even say it is a profoundly useless idea. But if viewed as a series of questions, Hirsch's book gives us something serious to think about. How can we help our students to organize information? How can we help them to sort the relevant from the irrelevant? How can we help them to make better use of information? How can we keep them from being driven insane by information?

AN ANSWER OF SORTS, as I have said, is suggested, indirectly, in Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*. Bloom is a professor on the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, and to the astonishment of everyone in the publishing industry, his book was a runaway best seller. The astonishment arises because neither his style nor his subject matter is of the sort that has ever been the stuff of big-time sales. Nonetheless, he has something to say, and it is in the form of a serious complaint. His complaint is that most American professors have lost their nerve. They have become moral relativists, which means that they are not capable of providing their students with a clear understanding of what is right thought and proper behavior. Moreover, they are also intellectual relativists, meaning that the professors refuse to defend their own culture and

are no longer committed to preserving and transmitting the best that has been thought and said.

Bloom's solution is that we go back to the basics of Western thought. He wants us to teach our students what Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Saint Augustine, and other luminaries have had to say on the great ethical and epistemological questions. He believes that by acquainting themselves with great books our students will acquire a moral and intellectual foundation that will keep them from doing stupid things like laughing at Woody Allen movies, listening to rock music, and making life difficult for school administrators



and professors. Bloom does not directly address the question of information chaos; he does not admit that there are fatal weaknesses in moral absolutism; and he does not acknowledge that there never was a time when American public education devoted itself to the study of Greek philosophy, German idealism, or, for that matter, most of what he covers in his philosophy courses at the University of Chicago.

Nonetheless, he is, in my opinion, on the right track. Although he does not seem to know it, Bloom is arguing that students need stories, narratives, tales, theories (call them what you will), that can serve as moral and intellectual frameworks. Without such frameworks, we have no way of knowing what things mean. Bloom understands that ignorance is not simply a

matter of unfamiliarity with things in general. It is a matter of not knowing things that one needs to know in particular. You do not know who manufactured the paper from which this magazine was made, and you do not know the name of the editor's wife, and you do not know Allan Bloom's telephone number, and you do not know 50 billion other facts of the world, because you deem them of no importance to your life. For this you should not be charged with ignorance. You should be praised for intellectual selectivity. But on what basis do you make your selections? How do you know what you need to know? And how do you know when and where and how you need to know it?

THE ANSWER, I believe, can be put in the following way (for which formulation I am indebted to my colleague Professor Christine Nystrom): Human beings require stories to give meaning to the facts of their existence. I am not talking here about those specialized stories that we call novels, plays, and epic poems. I am talking about the more profound stories that people, nations, religions, and disciplines unfold in order to make sense out of the world. For example, ever since we can remember, all of us have been telling ourselves stories about ourselves, composing life-giving autobiographies of which we are the heroes and heroines. If our stories are coherent and plausible and have continuity, they will help us to understand why we are here, and what we need to pay attention to and what we may ignore. A story provides a structure for our perceptions; only through stories do facts assume any meaning whatsoever. This is why children everywhere ask, as soon as they have the command of language to do so, "Where did I come from?" and, shortly after, "What will happen when I die?" They require a story to give meaning to their existence. Without air, our cells die. Without a story, our selves die.

Nations, as well as people, require stories and may die for lack of a believable one. In America we have told ourselves for two hundred years that our experiment in government is part of God's own plan. That has been a marvelous story, and it accounts for much of the success America has had. In the

Soviet Union they have told themselves a different story: that their experiment in government is *history's* plan. And in seventy years their story has transported them into a position of worldwide importance. I have the impression that neither of these nations believes its story now—and woe unto both if they do not find some other. Nations need stories, just as people do, to provide themselves with a sense of continuity, or identity. But a story does even more than that. Without stories as organizing frameworks we are swamped by the volume of our own experience, adrift in a sea of facts. Merely listing them cannot help us, because without some tale to guide us there is no limit to the list. A story gives us direction by providing a kind of theory about how the world works—and how it needs to work if we are to survive. Without such a theory, such a tale, people have no idea what to do with information. They cannot even tell what is information and what is not.

It is odd that Bloom did not see that the student uprisings of the late 1960s (which he detested) were an attempt to construct a new story for a changing world—a world paradoxically made smaller by new technologies of information and destruction but at the same time larger than ever. It is even odder that he rejects the need of the young to construct such a story to help them sort through the collection of disconnected, fragmented diploma requirements that is called a curriculum at most universities. It is odd because that is what Bloom's complaint is really about: the fact that our young people have no stories to guide them in managing the information of their culture and directing their education. He wants them to go back to the great books because they may find there the stories that have in the past given coherence and purpose to learning.

Perhaps that will work. But it will not, I think, unless the young are helped to reread those tales, to reconstruct them in light of the problems of our own times. They will not be helped by a dogged insistence that what was good enough for Plato and Cicero and the German idealists and even for Allan Bloom is good enough for them. It isn't. The purposes we conceive for learning are tied to our larger conception of the world, and the problems we face, and the way we

You deserve to know the facts about . . .

The "West Bank" and Gaza

Should Israel withdraw from the territories?

The "intifada," the uprising of Arab Palestinians in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and Gaza has been going on since December of 1987. It has so far caused over 500 deaths. Many believe that the conflict would end if Israel were to withdraw from the territories, cede them to the Palestinian Arabs, and allow them to create a Palestinian state in them.

What are the facts?

■ The suggestion that Israel should give up the territories and that good things would flow from that is based on two assumptions, namely 1) that the demands of the Palestinian Arabs for independence from Israel are the source of the Arab conflict with Israel; and 2) that Israel's withdrawal from the territories and the creation of a Palestinian state in them would satisfy the aspirations of the Palestinian Arabs, that it would end the hostility of the Arab nations against Israel, and that it would restore peace to the area.

■ Unfortunately, both of these assumptions are not in accord with reality. The desire of the Arab nations to destroy Israel has been unrelenting from the day of the creation of Israel in 1948. It has given rise to five major wars, has caused tens of thousands of casualties, and untold destruction. The PLO, whose covenant—never changed and never amended—unequivocally calls for the destruction of Israel, was founded in 1964, long before Israel's administration in the territories. Thus, the almost single-minded obsession of the Arabs to destroy Israel, and not Israel's refusal to accede to the creation of a Palestinian state, is the cause of the never-ending conflict in the area.

■ It is difficult for the Western mind to understand the depth of passion on the part of the Arabs for the destruction of Israel. Among reasonable people, most conflicts might eventually be amenable to peaceful and rational solution. But in the Arab-Israeli conflict, no such solution is in the cards for the foreseeable future. The reason is that 300 million Arabs consider the very ex-

istence of Israel an intolerable offense to their sense of history and destiny. It is not Israel's administration of the "West Bank" that is unacceptable to the Arabs; it is the very existence of Israel. There is no reason to believe that Israel's withdrawal and the establishment of a Palestinian state would appease the Arabs and induce them to make peace with Israel.

■ One can speculate as to what would be likely to happen if Israel—inadvisedly or ultimately bowing to pressure—were to yield the "West Bank" to Arab control. The murderous fratricidal passions that have been played out in Lebanon in the last fifteen years would be repeated in even more violent form. It is an improbable expectation that a state dominated by the murderous PLO would be the first Arab state ever to adhere to anything resembling democratic and human rights principles or that it would be a friend of the United States, and not an eager pawn of the Soviet Union.

■ The Lebanon slaughter would be shifted to the new Palestinian state, with Israel being a much readier target of its fury. A Palestinian Arab state on the "West Bank" would cut through Jerusalem, touch on the suburbs of Tel Aviv, and have a long border, nine to fifteen miles from the sea, with Israel's most thickly populated areas. Palestinian militias, armed, not with gasoline bombs and stones, but with helicopters, missiles, artillery and automatic weapons, would have Israeli pedestrians within rifle range, and Zion Square in Jerusalem and Ben Gurion airport within mortar range.

Few responsible elements in Israel's government and society wish to annex Gaza and the territories of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"). But also, hardly any responsible elements would consider relinquishing those territories for the creation of a Palestinian state. The Palestinian Arabs enjoy full civil rights and have been offered free elections and full autonomy by Israel, in line with Israel's commitments in the Camp David Accords. Moreover, Israel is ready and has always been ready to discuss the permanent status of the territories with responsible Palestinian representatives three years after the implementation of the autonomy. The situation of Israel and the territories is a bad one—no doubt about it. But the alternative to bad is not necessarily good. In this case, at least at the present time, the alternative would likely be a catastrophe, which, in its consequences, could even put the horrible situation of Lebanon in the shade. Real peace in the area will not come by Israel's yielding minimum strategic depth to its mortal enemies. It can only come about by the eventual rise of democratic governments in the "front-line" Arab states, governments that would accept Israel's existence and could learn to live in peaceful co-existence with it.

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Cindy J. Still
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have developed our story at a given time. Does one learn for the greater glory of God? to bring honor to one's family or tribe? for the fulfillment of a nation's destiny? to hasten the triumph of the proletariat? Few today find such purposes meaningful, because few believe anymore in the larger stories from which these purposes derive. Even fewer, I think, believe in the story of technological progress, which tells of a paradise to be gained through bigger and better machines. And the yuppie's tale, the story that tells us that life's most meaningful activity is to buy things, is an impoverished one indeed, which leads, in the end, to cynicism and hopelessness. Even the great modern story known as inductive science is not now as gripping as it once seemed. To the question "Where did we come from?" science answers, "It was an accident." To the question "How will it all end?" science's handmaiden, technology, answers, "Probably by an accident." And more and more of our young are finding that the accidental life is scarcely worth living.

I am not wise enough to say where the young can find what they need. Is it possible that all America can offer them is a list of names and places, and a shopping bag of books about the world as people conceived it in long-ago places and times? That, and the advice "JUST SAY NO" to drugs? Who will help them find out what they need to say yes to? How can they be helped to read, and write, a coherent story for our times? That is the educational issue of our era. And that is why Hirsch and Bloom are worth reading. Hirsch's book is useful to us because, unknowingly, he makes apparent the questions we need to answer. Bloom's book is useful to us because he suggests a solution. He believes that the texts that provided him with a sense of moral and intellectual purpose will serve for everyone. This is mere arrogance and can be disregarded. But we should thank him for reminding us that education must have a purpose, and a purpose connected to some larger, coherent tale. If we cannot find a way to help our students discover such a purpose, by constructing a meaningful tale, they are very likely to remain culturally illiterate—not because they do not know what is on Hirsch's list but because it won't make any difference if they do. □

A Symbol of the Eighties

by Jack Beatty

FEEDING FRENZY:

The Inside Story of Wedtech
by William Sternberg and
Matthew C. Harrison, Jr.
Henry Holt, \$19.95.

THE SCANDALS ENGULFING the Department of Housing and Urban Development involve considerably more money; the Pentagon procurement scandals pose more of a danger to national security; the S&L scandals will cost us a lot more in taxes; the scandals surrounding nuclear-weapons production facilities are a greater threat to the environment; and the Iran-contra scandal was a greater national embarrassment. But for all that, the Wedtech scandal still has a claim on what little indignation you may have left over from this decade of public disgrace. It was a real mess. Before it had run its course, Wedtech would criminally tarnish two Democratic congressmen, put a third under a cloud, and stain the already mottled reputation of a Republican senator; it would taint the Attorney General of the United States; it would implicate high officials of the Navy Department and the Small Business Administration; it would catch up in its coils union leaders, a prominent New York politician, and a Big Eight accounting firm; it would even drape one improbable tentacle over the celebrated form of Jessica Hahn.

In *Feeding Frenzy*, William Sternberg, a reporter who covered Wedtech for *Crain's New York Business*, and Matthew Harrison, Jr., who worked briefly as a vice-president of Wedtech, have combined to tell the story of a company devoted to plunder. Written with understated irony, lucid about the sharper accounting practices of American business, *Feeding Frenzy* is full of plot twists, narrow escapes, and deeply satisfying reversals of fortune. It's a tale of crime and—for once!—punishment: at this writing fourteen of the prime scoundrels are either in prison, some for as long as eight years, or on their way to prison.

Wedtech was in a peculiar sense an environmental crime; the sundry larcenies bundled up in its name cannot be understood apart from their locale—the South Bronx, perhaps the most emblematic tableau of ruin since ancient Rome. Both Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan made highly publicized pilgrimages to these grim acres, and both their administrations pledged to do something about them. Worse luck for the South Bronx, Wedtech was the something.

The company began life in 1965, as the Welbilt Electronic Die Corporation, on 148th Street, just off the Grand Concourse. One of its founders was a bad-tempered, barely literate son of Puerto Rican immigrants, named John Mariotta; in 1970, his business stalling, he took on a new partner, Fred Neuberger. (If they make a movie about Wedtech, Anthony Quinn should get the role of Mariotta, while Lee J. Cobb must do his plain duty and rise from the grave to play Neuberger.)

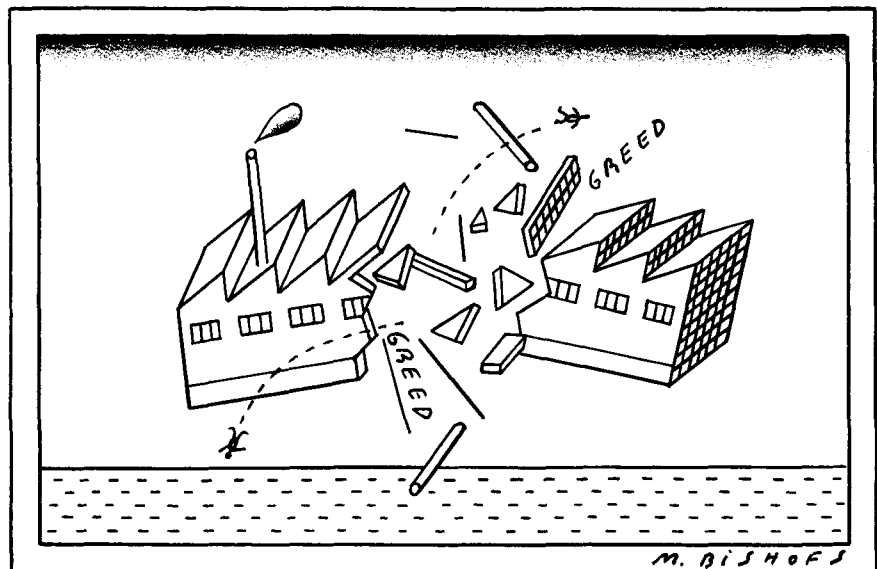
Born in Rumania before the Second World War, Neuberger escaped death at the hands of the fascist Iron Guard by the desperate expedient of hiking across Asia Minor to Palestine. There, he would later boast, he became a teenage member of the Stern gang and delivered “care packages”—that is to say, bombs—to the British forces occupying Palestine. Neuberger brought a surpassing ruthlessness to the enterprise. Mariotta’s contribution, however, was more important. He brought his ethnic affiliation. Hispanics, along with Afro-Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, are presumed, by federal fiat, to be “socially disadvantaged,” and so are eligible for a set-aside program run by the Small Business Administration, which grants federal contracts to economically disadvantaged firms with 51 percent or more minority ownership. In their first crime Neuberger and Mariotta agreed to deceive the SBA by hiding the nature of their partnership, Rumanian immigrants not being deemed socially disadvantaged.

Small metalworking contracts came Welbilt’s way for a few years and then Mariotta and Neuberger got wind of an army contract for 13,000 small engines to be put out for a bid by an “8a” company. That Welbilt had never built an

engine did not deter them; nor was their audacity tempered when the army turned down their bid, which was a whopping 500 percent of what it considered a fair price. From a new employee, a Harvard-educated PR man, the partners learned of a man who knew a man who knew Ed Meese. The link to Meese, then a high White House aide and soon to be Attorney General, was E. Robert Wallach, a San Francisco lawyer of liberal views and tony personal tastes who had been a law-school chum of Meese’s. For a “retainer” that eventually totaled \$425,000, Wallach (who has been sentenced to six years in prison for racketeering) agreed to help Welbilt get

sional Responsibility said, “[his conduct] should not be tolerated of any government employee, especially not the Attorney General of the United States. Were he still serving as Attorney General, we would recommend . . . that the President take disciplinary action.”

Meese was not the only intercessor for Welbilt. Lyn Nofziger, the former Reagan coat-holder, was found guilty of illegally lobbying the White House for Welbilt and two other companies. (His conviction was later overturned.) Mario Biaggi, the Democratic congressman from the Bronx, was convicted on fifteen counts of various crimes, from extortion to racketeering, in the



around the army procurement officer who had rejected their bid. A few “Dear Ed” letters wrought a surprising change in Meese. Though he never seemed to be without his Adam Smith tie, this hardest of the hard Reagan men fell for the pitch of his liberal friend to extend the visible hand of government to this minority-owned company. Prodded by Meese, the army reluctantly raised its idea of a fair price, and the SBA came up with additional funding. Welbilt, in turn, held its bid within the spectrum of sanity and got the contract.

That was the method of Welbilt’s persuasion: the well-connected lobbyist putting in a word with the better-connected Reagan Administration official. Of Meese in his dealings with Wallach, who had a financial stake in the company he was pleading for, the Justice Department’s Office of Profes-

Wedtech case. One of the Wedtech executives has alleged that Alphonse D’Amato, the New York Republican senator, got an illegal campaign contribution for his efforts on the company’s behalf, a charge the senator has denied. Robert Garcia, the Democratic congressman from the South Bronx, and his wife were recently convicted of extortion and conspiracy in connection with money they received from Wedtech. Stanley Simon, the Bronx borough president, was given five years for racketeering. And there were lesser officials. Their motive was greed. Officers of Welbilt used the money it got from the government contracts to steal and to bribe, not to build engines. They bribed the partner of the Big Eight firm Main Hurdman who was responsible for overseeing the audit of Welbilt’s books before it went public—selling stock in itself as Wedtech, that

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singular anomaly at once a publicly owned *and* a minority-owned company. They bribed the regional SBA man who helped to smooth that contradiction out. They bribed a Navy Department official, when the company was courting even more lucrative business from the Navy. When Parren Mitchell, the Democratic chairman of the committee charged with monitoring the SBA, started to investigate Wedtech's malefactions, they bribed Mitchell's two nephews, who, for \$50,000, agreed to talk to their uncle. Whether they did or not remains unknown; in any case, the investigation stalled.

One man Wedtech could not bribe was Carlos Campbell, the assistant secretary of commerce in charge of the Economic Development Administration. A former naval aviator who had been born and raised in Harlem, Campbell was immune to guff about the presumptive beneficence of "minority-owned" firms. He was, moreover, a shrewd financial analyst. He tried to protect the government's interest, arguing against lending the people's money to a sieve like Wedtech, and for his considerable pains, three days before Christmas of 1984 he was dismissed from the Reagan Administration.

THE AUTHORS skillfully evoke a certain amount of sympathy for the devil. Thus, while they tell us that Wedtech's nonunion employees were forced to accept a 10 percent wage cut in the same month in which the Wedtech executives stole more than \$400,000 from their own company, they also allow us to enjoy the spectacle of the boodlers spending their swag. Mariotta lived by the motto "If you travel like you are well off, people will accept you." And of course Mariotta was right. In contemporary America the appearance of prosperity is all too often taken as a sign of propriety. Neuberger bought so many houses that "he couldn't keep track of the keys to all of them." Another Wedtech executive, Mario Moreno, lost \$100,000 in a single sitting at the gaming tables of Atlantic City. The same fellow spent \$1 million on renovations for his \$85,000 Bronx house. "At the rear," the authors write,

he built a \$200,000 greenhouse, furnished it like a lanai and, to com-

plete the effect, added a miniature tropical rain forest along the edges. One level down, Moreno had a team of workers (most of whom would have probably scattered to the winds at the mention of the words *green card*) chisel an indoor swimming pool out of the bedrock. This cost another \$500,000. When it was done, Moreno possessed what was undoubtedly the only indoor grotto in the Bronx.

Wedtech had waxed with the Reagan defense buildup, but by 1986 the boom was over, and the government was growing curious about how the company had spent so much money so fast with so little (just over a third of the engines it had contracted to build, and dismal results on the navy contract as well) to show for it. Acting on a tip, an investigator for the Labor Department found that Wedtech had spent \$7,418,000 on improvements to one of its plants that were supposed to cost in the neighborhood of \$2,800,000. Kickbacks from pliant contractors to the Wedtech owners accounted for the difference. Investigations were launched.

The press, which had fawned over Wedtech ("Mariotta and Neuberger had discovered that journalists were easy marks for their heartwarming tales"), now began to grow skeptical. In the summer of 1985 Wedtech's high-priced lawyer, who coincidentally had also represented the *Village Voice*, called the editor of the *Voice* to "express his concern" about the way a negative story on Wedtech was being pursued. The story never ran, but that marked the end of the honeymoon for Wedtech. As the law-enforcement agencies prepared their indictments, headlines about how the Wedtech executives were making killings by selling off their stock began to appear.

The authors sum up what the company had wrought:

Wedtech had received federal contracts with a total value of \$494 million and had sold \$160 million in worthless securities to the public. In just a few years, Mariotta and the Gang of Four [the other Wedtech senior officers] had stolen more than \$5 million from Wedtech, had made at least another \$15 million selling their stock, and had lived like royalty at the company's expense.

If this had been honest graft that brought good jobs at good wages, to coin a phrase, to the hard-pressed people of the South Bronx, it might mitigate the crimes of the Wedtech thieves. But the jobs were not good: toxic pollution in the plant was so bad that the Defense Contract Administration Service urged that its employees be removed from the premises. And the wages were good only fitfully: the corrupt local chapter of the Teamsters used friendly persuasion to keep them low. In any case, these bad jobs did not last. Wedtech is out of business. One of its buildings houses a wholesale grocery distributor, the other a self-storage warehouse. "The Wedtech sign that overlooked the Major Deegan Expressway," the authors write, "blew down in a windstorm." It will be years before an honest minority contractor in the South Bronx will be able to get the government's help to put up a new sign in its place.

ON MARCH 6, 1984, Ronald Reagan came to New York for a fund-raiser at the Waldorf-Astoria. With money stolen from Reagan's government, two of the Wedtech executives bought \$20,000 worth of tickets to the event. Imagine the surprise of these equal-opportunity racketeers when, in his banquet speech, Reagan singled out Wedtech for special praise. "Real progress in this country can be traced to the work of conscientious and hardworking individuals," the President said.

"One such person is John Mariotta, who's providing jobs and training for the hardcore unemployed of the South Bronx. . . . And what gave Mr. Mariotta the courage to keep going when others quit? He tells us it was his faith in God. Now, his faith has moved mountains, helping hundreds of people who'd almost given up hope. People like John Mariotta are heroes for the eighties."

Jesus, one is tempted to conclude, wept. But let the authors of this first-rate piece of investigative journalism have the last word: "Perhaps the whole scandal is eloquent testimony to the 'greed is good' ethic that pervaded Wall Street and Washington during the Reagan presidency. In an ironic sense, John Mariotta *was* a symbol of the eighties." □

Brief Reviews



THUNDER AT TWILIGHT by Frederic Morton. Scribner's, \$22.50. Mr. Morton describes people and events in Vienna from January of 1913 to the outbreak of the First World War, in 1914, a disaster that he attributes, possibly out of reverse patriotism, primarily to Austria. He presents a lively *mélange* of the famous, the infamous, and the unknown, along with the spectacular and the commonplace. The story that he reconstructs has an ironic quality in that the young Serbian patriots who murdered the heir to the Habsburg throne at Sarajevo knew nothing about their victim except his dynastic status, and in fact killed the one Austrian authority who had stubbornly worked to maintain peace and who planned future liberal reforms. With the archduke dead, hotheads in the army and the foreign service were free to take action against Serbia, which was indeed something of a nuisance from the Austrian point of view. Austria was not entitled to act without the support of Germany. Serbia was dependent on the support of Russia, France, and England. The rulers of all these countries, while steadily increasing their armaments, regularly assured one another of their peaceful intentions. The international charade by which Austria set off a war that nobody officially wanted is an example of diplomacy at its mendacious worst. Mr. Morton points out, however, that while heads of state ditheringly sought for peace, their people, all across Europe, clamored for war. Patriotism ran amok. Russian strikers went back to work. Austrian slum-dwellers ceased demanding decent housing. Political dissidents dropped their placards and rushed to enlist. Mr. Morton attributes this mass insanity to what the Austrian polemicist Karl Kraus called "progress and education unmoored from God . . ." or, more prosaically, to the social dis-

placements of the Industrial Revolution, which had left all too many people doing dull work for low pay in unpleasant and unfamiliar surroundings. "Instead of beating their heads against the prison of their class, instead of deadening themselves with toil or liquor, the masses now had something to kill for." Historians have discussed the advent of the First World War and the feverish mixture of social rigidity and artistic experiment that characterized the decaying Habsburg Empire *ad infinitum*, but seldom with Mr. Morton's skill in selecting meaningful detail and revealing quotation.

STRAIGHT by Dick Francis. Putnam, \$18.95. Mr. Francis's narrator is Derek Franklin, a jump rider more or less grounded by a smashed ankle. He is further distressed by the unexpected death of his brother, from whom he inherits horses, gadgets, and a business. The horses are the wrong sort, the gadgets are enough to arouse nostalgia for witchcraft, the business has a spanner in its works, and some persons unknown are determined to prevent Franklin from correcting matters. Mr. Francis's plot is as wily as usual, but its underlying assumption is unexpectedly grim, for the villains are presented not as members of an aberrant minority but as normal elements in an amoral world.

EASTER ISLAND: THE MYSTERY SOLVED by Thor Heyerdahl. Random House, \$24.95. Readers who recall the author's monumental *The Art of Easter Island* (Doubleday, 1975) will quickly realize that his present book begins as a condensation of that work. Eventually, however, new findings appear, along with a serious appeal to archaeologists to pay more attention to local traditions and idioms. Readers coming newly to the odd questions raised by Easter Island will surely find the whole text informative and interesting, both as the known history of the island and as an illustration of the conflicting interpretations and consequent disputes of which archaeologists are capable. Mr. Heyerdahl does not speak for the whole profession.

A WILD SHEEP CHASE by Haruki Murakami. Kodansha, \$18.95. Mr. Murakami's novel involves an enormous secret financial-political machine, a bored

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businessman blackmailed into pursuit of a magical sheep, a rich dissident holed up in the snows of Hokkaido, a ghost, and a large cast of subsidiary eccentrics. The detail is strictly non-Japanese. Clothes, food, music, and transport are all imports from the West. Even the decrepit inn in a withering northern town has its pinball machines, albeit of rather poor quality. It is possible, with a bit of imaginative effort, to see this novel as a protest against modern Japan's frantic addiction to alien ideals of power and money. It takes no effort at all to enjoy reading it.

THE HUSTONS by Lawrence Grobel. Scribner's, \$24.95. Mr. Grobel has undertaken the group biography of a three-generation theatrical dynasty. Among them, the Hustons have done, or tried, practically everything possible, from vaudeville (the patriarch, Walter, began as a song-and-dance man), through serious drama, to film acting, directing, and script-writing (his son John did them all). The careers of the grandchildren, Angelica, Danny, and Tony, are not yet so comprehensive, presumably merely through lack of time. The author's biographical method in dealing with these assorted (and in John's case decidedly difficult) people appears to have been to interview everyone who ever knew any of them and to record, with very little critical appraisal, whatever he was told. The result is a great deal of trivia intermixed with information, which will fascinate enthusiasts of show business.

THE ART OF ADVENTURE by Galen Rowell. Collins, \$45.00. Mr. Rowell is a daredevil mountaineer and a splendid wilderness photographer. He has worked in Asia, Africa, Alaska, the High Sierra, and South America, and his pictures from these regions are always beautiful but not necessarily soothing to the acrophobic. There is no reason to think that Mr. Rowell would commit murder for the sake of a good shot, but he is clearly willing to risk inadvertent suicide. How else can one account for a close-up of a Kodiak bear and cub with the photographer's only escort "a fish and game warden carrying a loaded shotgun"?

Answers to the November Puzzles

"CRYPTIC MENU"

Across answers are listed in the order of their appearance on the menu.

Across. WH(ITE) MEAT; RO(A)STER; C(LAM-)BAKE; OVER (double def.); A-B-ALONE; SUPERN-A-L (*prunes* anag.); NECTARINE (anag.); ACES (hidden); CO(WAR)D (*raw* rev.); A-CID; SP-EARS; RELATE (anag.); TOR-TES (rev.); SUNT-AN (*nuts* anag.); S(HERB)ET; A(PPI)LES; RUSTLED (anag.); I(O)T-A Down. 1. CAS-TRAT-I (rev.) 2. O(n)-CUL(t)-US(e) 3. W-I-P-E-S 4. RA-RELY 5. DANCERS (anag.) 6. P(A)LATE 7. PL-URALS 8. LO(GI)CAL 9. SERE (hidden periph.) 10. NONE(t) 11. SELTZER-S (*pretzels* anag. -p+s) 12. A-R-TISAN (*stain* anag.) 13. STATIS-T (anag. +T) 14. RE(HE)ARS 15. EJECTA (anag.) 16. T(h)E-AM UP (*puma* rev.) 17. BE(A-K)ER 18. O-(HI)O 19. BRA-V-A 20. WA(R)S

C	O	W	A	R	D	A	P	P	L	E	S
A	C	I	D	A	A	B	A	L	O	N	E
S	U	P	E	R	N	A	L	U	G	O	R
T	L	E	N	E	C	T	A	R	I	N	E
R	U	S	T	L	E	D	T	A	C	E	S
A	S	A	S	Y	R	R	E	L	A	T	E
T	O	R	T	E	S	E	T	S	L	B	L
I	O	T	A	J	S	H	E	R	B	E	T
W	H	I	T	E	M	E	A	T	R	A	Z
A	I	S	I	C	L	A	M	B	A	K	E
R	O	A	S	T	E	R	U	O	V	E	R
S	U	N	T	A	N	S	P	E	A	R	S

ACROSTIC NO. 52

"Hypocrisy is the most difficult and nerve-racking vice that any man can pursue; it needs an unceasing vigilance and a rare detachment of spirit. It cannot, like adultery or gluttony, be practised at spare moments; it is a wholtime job."

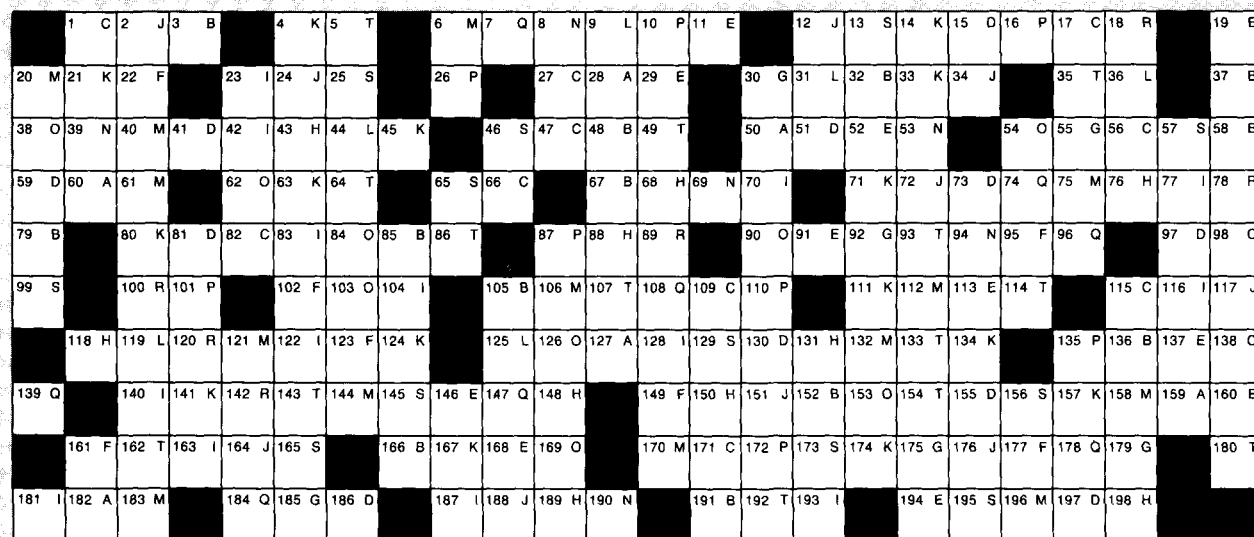
—(W.) Somerset Maugham, *Cakes and Ale*

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

ACROSTIC No. 53

BY DOROTHY OSBORNE

The letters of clue answers, when put in the appropriately numbered squares, will spell out a quotation.
The first letters of clue answers spell the author and source of the quotation.



The solution to Acrostic No. 52 appears on page 128.

A. Old World finch

159 28 60 127 182 50

B. Composition by Franz Liszt (2 wds.)

105 3 37 136 152 79 191 166 67
48 85 32 58

C. Sundae topping

27 98 115 1 109 82 138 17 66
56 171 47

D. Token of peace (2 wds.)

51 186 130 15 59 97 73 81 155
197 41

E. Classified listings (2 wds.)

160 168 11 52 137 113 194 91 29
146 19

F. Typographical ornament

102 177 95 123 161 149 22

G. Propagandistic whopper (2 wds.)

30 92 179 185 55 175

H. Poorly concealed item of information (2 wds.)

88 118 198 131 148 189 150 68 43 76

I. Instrument for examining the retina

23 140 116 128 181 122 42 77 187
104 83 163 70 193

J. Cold War principal

164 72 176 24 12 2 151 34 117 188

K. Saguaro (hyph.; 2 wds.)

63 14 134 157 21 80 111 167 124
71 141 33 174 4 45

L. Influential campaign-funder (2 wds.)

36 31 9 125 119 44

M. Mystical contemplation of one's navel

106 183 6 144 196 158 112 61 121
20 40 170 132 75

N. Take the teeth out of

53 94 8 69 190 39

O. Cocoon star (2 wds.)

153 126 169 38 90 84 54 62 103

P. Potpourri of musical airs

87 172 101 135 10 110 16 26

Q. Sophoclean tragedy

184 108 147 74 96 7 178 139

R. Black Sea peninsula

120 89 100 142 18 78

S. Gossip; small talk (hyph.)

99 57 173 46 145 13 25 129 65

T. Mild punishment (4 wds.)

86 93 114 143 35 133 180 192 154

64 162 107 5 49

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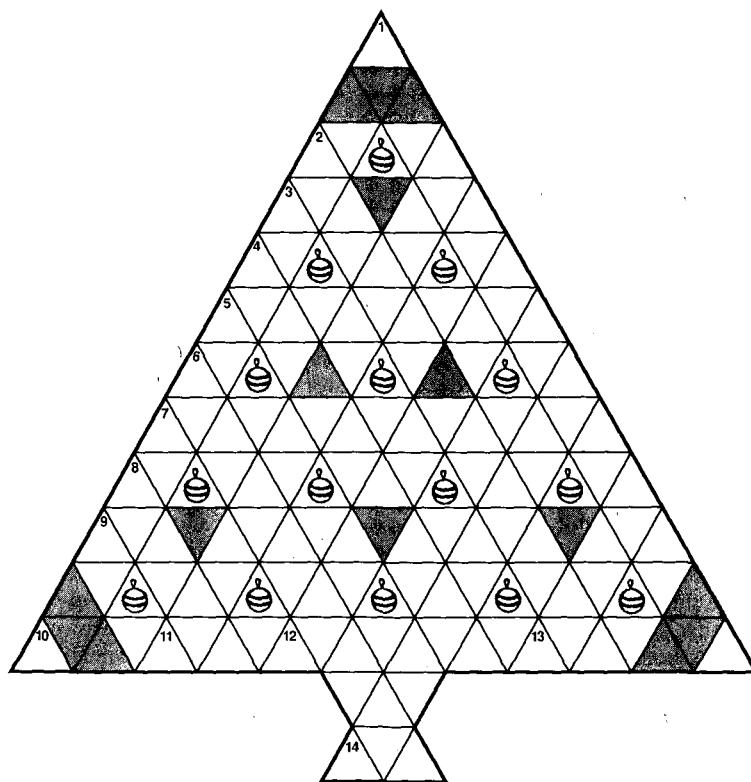
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THE PUZZLER

BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

DECORATIONS

This puzzle's clue answers are to be entered consecutively in their numbered rows (Across, Down, or Up); Down and Up answers angle from left to right. When all answers have been filled in, the nine letters in the shaded corner bands (starting from the top and reading clockwise) will provide a clue to the word formed by the remaining six shaded triangles. Answers include two words not found in *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*: the one clued first at 5 Across and the one clued second at 12 Up. One of those answers and three others are proper nouns.



The answers to last month's *Puzzler* appear on page 128.

ACROSS

3. Astronomical dark area covers North America from east to west (7)
5. Assassin in Japan, essentially! (5)
Pop around raised rooftop structure (6)
7. Mail back deeds in fall (8)
Survey material on back of reports (7)
9. Arboreal mammal problem urgently needs investigation (5)
Mice do experiments with doctor (6)
Criminal, embracing Capone, went ahead and visited (8) (*two words*)
10. Study circuit incorporating certain flip-flops (7)
French nobleman paid Hun off (7)
Bad guy outside hurt one good guy (9)

DOWN

1. Philosopher's kid left in spring (9)
Strips of wood brought back in Danish tale (5)
Dictator grants no changes, keeping chief of military (9)
2. Eat a lot, including last piece of corn (5)
Fruit makes mongrel rave (7)
Celebrity lady's entering place of worship (7) (*hyphenated*)
4. Long wood (4)
Take apart writing desks, finally, with peripheral cut (5)
Said kin cheats (6)
6. Attendee describes service, in retrospect, as something tenuous (8)
Have fun, getting high in back (7)
8. In ways, I'm turning creative (7)

UP

10. *Sleeper's* funny beyond compare (8)
Winter fogs giving Kelly's possum chills (8)
Hindu writing about mother in part of Indonesia (7)
11. Not as goofy as a nerd, obviously (5)
Imprudent plan involving a U.S. capital (6)
In bed, yearn quietly for flower holder (8)
12. Gold adds zip to patronage (8)
Christmas song about one excellent horse-drawn sleigh (7)
13. Dull finish diminished honor for Spanish performer (7)
14. Seawater engulfs some boundless, foul-smelling liquid (7)
Gourd from a research center running into money (8)

NOTE: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

WORD WATCH

BY ANNE H. SOUKHANOV

brain spa *noun*, a New Age therapeutic facility in which clients are subjected to soothing and stimulating visual and aural effects, generated electronically, in an effort to induce relaxation, euphoria, and "synchronicity" of the brain, a state that is purported to reduce stress, enhance self-esteem, and improve problem-solving ability: "For the last 14 months Mr. [Randy] Adamadama . . . has presided here at the Universe of You, Marin County's first *brain spa*" (*The New York Times*).

BACKGROUND: *Brain spa* clients, many of whom interrupt their workdays for treatments, recline on lounges and listen through earphones to a mixture of sounds from nature and New Age music while wearing goggles that flash kaleidoscopic patterns before their eyes. This equipment, known as the Synchro-Energizer, was invented by Denis E. Gorges. Although Gorges admits that he isn't sure exactly how the Synchro-Energizer works, the concept of the *brain spa* seems to be gaining a measure of popularity: there are now twenty *brain spas* that use Synchro-Energizers in the United States, and facilities have opened in Japan, Spain, and Germany. Adamadama "hopes such *brain spas* will become a sort of McMeditation, doing for brain function what fast-food franchising did for hamburgers. 'You park your car, you run in, you get your

Here are a few of the words being tracked by the editors of The American Heritage Dictionary, published by Houghton Mifflin. A new word that exhibits sustained use may eventually make its way into the dictionary. The information below represents the first stage of research, not the final product.

anxiety released,' he said of his operation. 'Every shopping center should have one'" (*The New York Times*).

influence mine *noun*, an explosive mine activated by an effect that a target vessel produces on water in the vicinity of the mine or on radiation emanating from the mine: "There have been alarming indications both that the Iranians are building new mines and that they may be acquiring new, so-called *influence mines* from Libya" (*The Washington Post*).

BACKGROUND: One of the early meanings of *influence* was "an ethereal fluid thought to flow from the stars and to affect in some way the actions of human beings." In the relatively new compound *influence mine* the word *influence* has a similar, if more technologically precise, meaning. *Influence mines* are designed to detonate without coming into contact with a vessel. They can be triggered by changes in water pressure as the target vessel passes, by the magnetic pull of the vessel's hull, or by sound waves caused by engines within a given distance. The word *influence* occurs in numerous related compounds—for ex-

ample, *influence field* (the area affected by a ship's mine-sweeping equipment), *influence release sinker* (a sinker that holds a moored or a rising mine at the seabed and releases it when activated by a subtle effect produced by a ship), and *influence sweep* (a technical surveillance operation designed to produce an effect similar to that produced by a ship and thus activate mines).

Nintendo neck *noun*, stiffness and strain in the neck and shoulder muscles, often severe, caused by continuous forced flexing of the neck and seen especially in youngsters who play television video games while sitting or lying on the floor, looking up for extended periods: "*Nintendo neck* . . . results in a charley horse-like spasm and irritation of the delicate neck nerves" (Knight-Ridder Newspapers).

BACKGROUND: Caused by poor viewing posture and not by the game from which it derives its name, *Nintendo neck* has been so designated by a chiropractor in Palmerton, Pa. The technical term for this malady, which is not new, is

"acute nontraumatic torticollis," consisting in "a subluxation of the lower cervical or the upper thoracic vertebra." Similar terms for afflictions associated with the sufferers' life-styles are *tractor back*, *auto whiplash*, *miniskirt lower back*, and *roller-disco neuropathy*.

zoomer *noun, slang*, a person who returns to college after a hiatus to complete an undergraduate or a graduate program: "The *zoomer* phenomenon has created a potential student body that hasn't been picked to the bone by aggressive recruiters and changing demographics. . . . *Zoomers* encompass a wide variety of backgrounds and motivations" (*The Washington Post*).

BACKGROUND: The word *zoomer*, probably influenced by *boomer* (as in *Baby Boomer*), is loosely derived from the verb *resume*. According to the *Post*, 40 percent of the 10.6 million undergraduates enrolled in U.S. colleges are older than 25, and of these, two thirds (or almost 3 million) are pursuing degrees after interruptions in their college careers. *Zoomers* can be broken down into three major groups: young adults, aged 25–34 and constituting 56 percent of all *zoomers*; mid-career adults taking advantage of employee-education-assistance programs; and older adults whose children are grown and whose discretionary incomes permit them to return to academic pursuits.

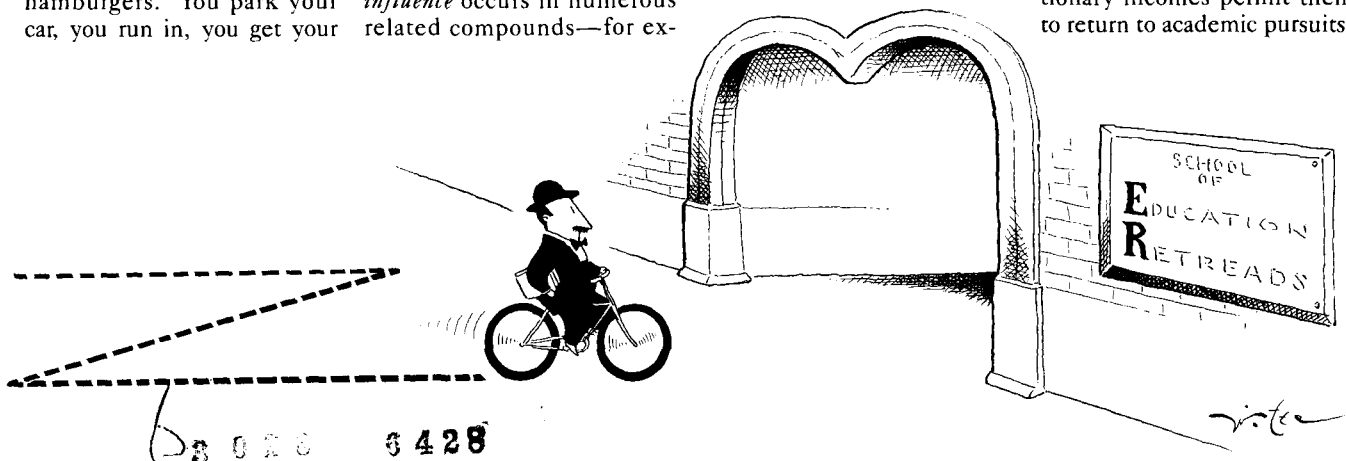


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SAAB

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HOME: Perth, Scotland.

AGE: 143.

PROFESSION: Scotch whisky.

HOBBY: Eavesdropping. "I get plenty of chances."

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